



THE
SEA IN THE
GREEK IMAGINATION

MARIE-CLAIRE BEAULIEU

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ABBREVIATIONS

Introduction

The sea is everywhere in the Greek landscape. From rugged mountaintops to low-lying plains, the Mediterranean is rarely out of sight. For islanders and coastal villagers the sea is more than a geographical reality, it is a way of life. This was even truer for the Greeks of Antiquity, who were excellent seafarers and sustained fisheries from the earliest times onward. In fact, the Greeks relied on the sea not only for sustenance and transportation, but also for news, warfare, commercial and political exchange, as well as scientific development. The sea also held a large place in the religious life of the Greeks. Seawater was used for various kinds of purification, many rituals were held on the seashore, and some festivals required throwing offerings to the gods into the sea. Seafaring was also the occasion for numerous rituals.¹ In this way, the sea pervaded many aspects of ancient life.

Looking at the Mediterranean, bright blue in the Greek sunlight, one might expect to find the sea associated with positive concepts in Greek literature, especially nourishment, beauty, and divinity. Homer calls the sea ἄλα δῖαν “the bright sea, the divine sea” (e.g., *Il.* 1.141). Myths tell of beautiful Nereids living in the water and of lucky finds on the seashore. In part for these reasons, psychoanalysts have viewed the sea as a representation of the mother figure.² For instance, in the *Iliad*, Achilles comes to the seashore to lament his trials and is comforted by his divine mother, Thetis, who comes out of the sea to help her son. In this episode, the sea provides a backdrop for maternal reassurance. Thetis, as a Nereid, can also be thought to represent the maternal aspects of the sea since she is a *kourotrophic* divinity, a goddess who helps rear the young.³ In the same line of thought, the sea has been put in parallel with the earth as a nurturing mother, particularly in view of the sea’s role in the Greek cosmogony. In the *Theogony* 131, the sea (Pontus) is one of the children born out of Gaia’s parthenogenesis. Thus, the sea is one of the primeval elements that help conceive and shape the world. Similarly, the Titan Oceanus, the river that encircles the world beyond the sea, is called the father of all things in the *Iliad*.⁴ Oceanus and his wife Tethys are remarkably fertile, giving rise to three thousand Oceanids, three thousand Naiads, and their brothers the three thousand rivers.

Yet for all its fertility and the nourishment it provides, the sea is not exclusively female in Greek mythology. The sea is personified as the Titans Pontus and Oceanus, who are male. Likewise, the Greek language includes many words for the sea, namely πέλαγος “the high sea,” ἅλς/ἅλμη “the salt water,” θάλασσα “the sea,” and πόντος “the sea.” Of these words, πέλαγος and πόντος are masculine while ἅλς, ἅλμη, and θάλασσα are feminine. Finally, the mythical creatures that inhabit the sea, such as Nereids, Oceanids, and Tritons, are either male or female. It is therefore difficult to understand the sea as a mother figure in a Greek context, since it is not exclusively female.

Moreover, the sea’s fertility is counterbalanced by a reputation for barrenness. Homer calls the sea ἀτρύγετος “fruitless, unharvested.” This curious epithet contrasts the sterility of salt water with the fertility of the fields on the earth and the fresh water that irrigates them. Even the numerous fish that inhabit the sea (cf. the Homeric epithet πόντος ἰχθυόεις “the fish-filled sea”) evoke death rather than sustenance, as sailors worry that their bodies will be mangled by fish in case of shipwreck.⁵

Finally, the common view of the entrance to Hades as a chasm in the earth competes with a representation of Hades as located beyond the sea, on the shores of the Ocean.⁶

Odysseus, for instance, must sail westward all the way to the northwestern horizon to consult the seer Tiresias in Hades. Other entrances to Hades, while they are usually caves or crevices in the earth, are located by the sea. Examples include Cape Taenarum on the Peloponnesus and Heracleia on the Black Sea, two caverns from which Heracles was said to have dragged Cerberus out of Hades.⁷ Thus the sea has an ambivalent character in Greek culture. It is a source of food and a path of communication, but also a disquieting empty and barren space that evokes death and can even lead to Hades.

The two visions of Hades as located beyond the sea or under the earth are not antithetical. In Greek cosmology, the earth is surrounded by the encircling river Ocean, which can be accessed by sailing out of the Mediterranean through the Pillars of Heracles (the Strait of Gibraltar), or out of the Black Sea in the east.⁸ On the Ocean, the water meets the vault of the sky and the corresponding chasm of the Underworld, forming a sphere whose diameter is occupied by the Ocean.⁹ Islands pepper the surface of the Ocean, but no continent is imagined to exist beyond the encircling river, at least not in the Archaic or Classical period.¹⁰ Thus, when death is represented as a sea voyage to the Ocean, it can lead either to the Underworld or to the Islands of the Blessed. In the case of Heracles, who acquires immortality as a result of his exploits on the Ocean, he travels upward to Olympus. As this book demonstrates, the sea, because it is in between the earth, the Underworld, and Olympus, mediates between the worlds of the living, the dead, and the gods.

Exploration Versus Imagination

But how did these imaginary models interact with Greek exploration in the Atlantic? Did empirical knowledge subsume mythical constructs about the sea? Pindar and Euripides declare that sailing past the Pillars of Heracles is forbidden, since it is an encroachment upon divine territory.¹¹ Yet, according to Herodotus 1.163, Phocaeans crossed the Pillars of Heracles as early as the seventh century. They landed in Tartessus on the Atlantic coast of Spain. There, the Phocaeans initiated a profitable trading relationship with the locals, which brought goods from Brittany and Cornwall, among other distant lands. About the same time, around 630 BC, a certain Colaeus of Samos also landed in Tartessus, albeit unintentionally. Colaeus was sailing to Egypt from his home in Samos, but he was driven off course to the small island of Platea on the coast of Libya. After landing there, Colaeus put to sea again, still trying to reach Egypt, but he was blown by a consistent easterly wind all the way through the Pillars of Heracles and finally arrived in Tartessus. Herodotus 4.152 describes his journey in the following way:

Αὐτοὶ δέ, ἀναχθέντες ἐκ τῆς νήσου καὶ γλιχόμενοι Αἰγύπτου, ἔπλεον
ἀποφερόμενοι ἀπηλιώτῃ ἀνέμῳ· καὶ οὐ γὰρ ἀνίει τὸ πνεῦμα, Ἡρακλέας στήλας
διεκπερήσαντες ἀπίκοντο ἐς Ταρτησσόν, θείῃ πομπῇ χρεώμενοι.

They left the island trying to reach Egypt, and they sailed off course, blown away by an easterly wind; and the wind did not stop until they passed through the Pillars of Heracles and came to Tartessus under divine guidance.

Herodotus's claim that Colaeus benefited from divine guidance is revealing. While the journey itself exhibits nothing super natural, Herodotus indicates that surviving such an adventure and putting in to safe harbor is extraordinary. Indeed, a strong contrary current runs through the Strait of Gibraltar and makes navigation hazardous, which may have contributed to shaping the beliefs concerning the outer Ocean.¹² Furthermore, Herodotus's comment about divine guidance may reflect the sacred and forbidden

character of the Ocean in earlier Greek literature. Indeed, Oceanic journeys always require divine guidance, as in the cases of Odysseus and Perseus, who receive the help of Circe and Athena, respectively. In general, involuntary sea journeys in which the protagonist is taken away to a distant location are often seen as divinely guided, as in the story of the foundation of Delphi by the Cretan sailors or the shipwrecked hero Icadius,¹³ or again Arion's salvation from the sea by a dolphin.¹⁴ Thus, while Herodotus strongly denies the existence of the encircling Ocean against earlier geographers such as Hecataeus of Miletus,¹⁵ claiming that it cannot be proven, he seems to conserve some of the awe that was associated with journeys on the mythical river.

According to Pliny the Elder 7.197, another Phocaeen named Midacritus traveled on the Ocean to the Cassiterides, or Tin Islands, in the sixth century. These islands are located on the southwestern coast of Great Britain. Although some authors such as Diodorus 5.38 place the islands off the coast of Spain and Strabo in the Ocean, roughly at the latitude of Britain,¹⁶ there is a relative consensus among scholars that the Cassiterides must refer to islands off the coast of Britain, such as the Scillies, or to the coast itself, since newly discovered coasts are often mistaken for islands. This journey not only opened a new sea route to Northern Europe, but it also gave the Phocaeans direct access to tin, previously available only through trade with Tartessus. Unfortunately for the Phocaeans, knowledge of this northern trade route was lost soon after Midacritus's journey, because in the fifth century the Carthaginians gained such power as to completely exclude the Greeks from the Atlantic Ocean.¹⁷ The Carthaginians held strong positions in Corsica, Sardinia, and Sicily, as well as on the Mediterranean coast of Spain, which allowed them complete control of the Strait of Gibraltar.

The Carthaginians pursued their own exploration beyond the Pillars of Heracles. Around 500 BC, in the heyday of the Carthaginian Empire, the brothers Hanno and Himilco sailed into the Atlantic. On the one hand, Himilco sailed to the northwest, perhaps as far as Britain.¹⁸ The purpose of his voyage is unknown, but he was probably looking for tin deposits. On the other hand, Hanno sailed to the south along the West African coast.¹⁹ Hanno's own account of his journey is preserved through a Greek adaptation known as the *Periplus*. According to this text, the purpose of Hanno's voyage was to found Carthaginian colonies in West Africa. Such colonies, besides extending Carthaginian land holdings and resources, would have extended Carthaginian trade routes in the region. Scholars are still debating exactly what point of the African Coast Hanno reached. Most agree that he went as far as modern-day Ghana, or perhaps the Niger delta. Some even believe that he reached modern Cameroon.²⁰ In any case, Hanno's voyage and his account were familiar to geographers all around the Mediterranean, particularly in Greece, where it was widely read.

During this period, the Carthaginians discovered an island in the western Ocean, many days' sail from the Pillars of Heracles. According to the author of the *Mirabilium Auscultationes*,²¹ the island featured many species of trees, navigable rivers, and "a surprising variety of other crops" (τοῖς λοιποῖς καρποῖς θαυμαστήν). Due to this bountiful nature, Diodorus adds that the inhabitants of the island spend their days banqueting, a happy existence that mimics that of the gods.²² As can be expected, the island attracted settlers. According to the author of the *Mirabilium Auscultationes*, when numerous Carthaginians emigrated to the island, the Carthaginian leaders issued a prohibition against sailing there, and then proceeded to kill everyone who already lived on the island out of the fear that a colony might grow which could pose a threat to Carthage. By contrast, Diodorus suggests that the Carthaginian leaders prevented emigration to the island so that the Carthaginian people could take refuge there in case of an invasion of the mother city. Whatever the case may be, we note that the island was forbidden to ordinary people and that its description in both accounts closely resembles

the Hesiodic Islands of the Blessed.²³ This suggests that the Greek concept of paradisiacal islands beyond the Pillars of Heracles spurred the rise of the traditions concerning the island of the Carthaginians. Indeed, the account is firmly rooted within the popular tradition of “won der” literature, alongside such other legendary lands as Atlantis, Ultima Thule, and the islands of the western Ocean, which are also forbidden to living mortals or lost in the depths of the sea.²⁴ The Greeks imagined lands in the western Ocean that transcended the ills of mortal existence, yet precisely for this reason had to remain inaccessible.

The end of the fourth century BC was without contest the most fertile period for Greek exploration because of Alexander’s amazing journey to the East. The late fourth century also knew of another explorer, much less famous than Alexander, Pytheas of Massalia. Pytheas’s exact itinerary has long been a contentious issue, but it is thought that he traveled from Massalia at least to the British Isles, and perhaps as far as Iceland.²⁵ Pytheas published an account of his journey titled *On the Ocean*, which is unfortunately lost. The book was widely read in the Greek world. However, while Pytheas’s work was read, it was not necessarily believed. Many accused Pytheas of falsehood and of compiling a series of tall tales in his book. Strabo 2.4.1, quoting Polybius, writes,

καὶ Πυθέαν, ὅς οὐ παρακρουσθῆναι πολλούς, ὅλην μὲν τὴν Βρεττανικὴν ἐμβαδὸν ἐπελθεῖν φάσκοντος, τὴν δὲ περίμετρον πλείονων ἢ τεττάρων μυριάδων ἀποδόντος τῆς νήσου, προσιστορήσαντος δὲ καὶ τὰ περὶ τῆς Θούλης καὶ τῶν τόπων ἐκείνων, ἐν οἷς οὔτε γῆ καθ’ αὐτὴν ὑπῆρχεν ἔτι οὔτε θάλαττα οὔτ’ ἀήρ, ἀλλὰ σύγκριμά τι ἐκ τούτων πλεύμονι θαλαττίῳ ἐοικός, ἐν ᾧ φησι τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλατταν αἰωρεῖσθαι καὶ τὰ σύμπαντα, καὶ τοῦτον ὡς ἂν δεσμὸν εἶναι τῶν ὅλων, μήτε πορευτὸν μήτε πλωτὸν ὑπάρχοντα. τὸ μὲν οὖν τῷ πλεύμονι ἐοικός αὐτὸς ἑωρακέναι, τὰλλα δὲ λέγειν ἐξ ἀκοῆς.... ὁ δὲ καὶ μέχρι τῶν τοῦ κόσμου περάτων κατωπτευκέναι τὴν προσάρκτιον τῆς Εὐρώπης πᾶσαν, ἣν οὐδ’ ἂν τῷ Ἑρμῇ πιστεύσαι τις λέγοντι.

Pytheas who has led many people into error by saying that he traversed the whole of Britain on foot, giving the island a circumference of forty thousand stades, and telling us also about Thule, those regions in which there was no longer any proper land nor sea nor air, but a sort of mixture of all three of the consistency of a jelly-fish in which one can neither walk nor sail, holding everything together, so to speak. He says he himself saw this jellyfish-like substance but the rest he derives from hearsay.... But Pytheas says that he personally visited the whole northern coast of Europe as far as the ends of the world, a thing we would not even believe of Hermes himself if he told us so. (trans. Paton)

Polybius is particularly indignant at Pytheas’s claim that he visited the entire cosmos (μέχρι τῶν τοῦ κόσμου περάτων “up to the boundaries of the world”), something that the god Hermes himself could not boast of. The introduction of Hermes in the passage is revealing. As the messenger god, Hermes is the patron of travelers (and liars and thieves!). Yet, these functions of Hermes overlap with his role as the messenger between different zones of the cosmos, namely between Olympus, the earth, and the Underworld. Hermes frequently carries messages from the gods to men. He also appears in funerary scenes as a psychopomp accompanying the souls of the deceased to Hades. Finally, Hermes also appears on two vases showing Heracles obtaining the fruit of immortality from the garden of the Hesperides.²⁶ Thus, Hermes controls travel not only through space, but also through different states of existence. In Polybius’s view, Pytheas’s claims seem to have amounted to the same.

Pytheas may in fact have had such ideas in mind. His description of the northern seas as a mixture of earth, air, and water recalls archaic descriptions of the meeting point of the three elements in the Ocean. Pindar *Pythian* 10.27–29 uses a remarkably similar formulation when he describes Perseus’s journey across the Ocean. In Pindar’s account, Perseus visits the fabulous land of the Hyperboreans in the northernmost reaches of the sea:

ὁ χάλκεος οὐρανὸς οὐ ποτ’ ἀμβατὸς αὐτῷ·
οὔσαις δὲ βροτὸν ἔθνος ἀγλαΐαις
ἀπτόμεσθα, περαίνει πρὸς ἔσχατον
πλόον· ναυσὶ δ’ οὔτε πεζὸς ἰὼν κεν εὔροις
ἐς Ὑπερβορέων ἀγῶνα θαυμαστὰν ὁδόν.

The brazen sky is forever impassable; whatever joys the race of mortals can attain, he reaches the end of that sailing course; for neither by ship nor foot could you find the extraordinary road that leads to the meeting place of the Hyperboreans.

Pindar describes Perseus’s journey in terms of crossing the sky and insists on the ambiguous materiality of the locale, implying that it is neither solid nor liquid. Most importantly, according to Pindar, the Ocean is impassable by mortal means, an idea that matches the forbidden nature of the Ocean in some of Pindar’s other poems. Similarly, while the gelatinous substance Pytheas describes is fully explainable as an ice floe, the fact that he describes it as impassable recalls mythical conceptions of the Ocean such as Pindar’s. While Pytheas most likely witnessed an actual natural phenomenon, he interpreted it in mythical terms.

In the same manner, Pytheas blends empirical observations with mythical thought in two other surviving fragments of his book, fragments 8 and 9 in Roseman’s edition.²⁷ In these fragments, Pytheas claims to have seen the “bedchamber of the Sun” in the confines of the Ocean. As is well known from ancient myths, the god Helios and other celestial bodies were thought to reside in the western Ocean and to bathe in its waters every day during their revolutions around the world. Yet, Pytheas is not simply retelling old stories: he carefully notes the discrepancies between sunlight hours in the northern Ocean and in Greece. Pytheas thus blends empirical geography with the geographies of the mind, the cultural constructs that shape men’s perceptions of the world and of their own place in it.

In this perspective, we must question the motivations of ancient explorers. What relationship did they see between their travels and the myths they heard told by poets? Barry Cunliffe writes,

The myths upon which the Greeks were brought up, embedded in the poems of Hesiod and Homer and widely available in a rich oral tradition, helped the mind to come to terms with the extent and complexity of existence—they provided comfort and reassurance up to a point. But to the growing class of “new men”—city dwellers freed from the economic necessity of producing their own food and nurtured by an increasing flow of startling information about the world—these ancient folk tales were no longer intellectually satisfying.²⁸

Cunliffe adopts an evolutionary model to explain ancient science, suggesting that the Greeks progressed from mythical thought to empirical knowledge. Yet, no preserved ancient testimony identifies such a motivation for undertaking geographical exploration or any scientific activity. When they are stated, the motivations of ancient explorers are mainly commercial. They sailed in search of tin and other natural resources and sought to take control of trade routes for their cities. In their accounts, as discussed above, myths

and empirical observations are in a constant and dynamic dialogue with one another. Even Herodotus, the so-called Father of Empiricism, blends factual knowledge and firsthand observations with mythical thought, as in his account of the Hyperboreans' relationship with Delos.²⁹ For the ancients, the experience of the world overlapped with the imaginary and religious constructs attached to it. As is commonly recognized, no aspect of ancient life was devoid of religious significance,³⁰ and sailing on the sea or on the outer Ocean is certainly no exception.³¹

Comparative Perspectives

The Greek view of the sea as a point of contact between the imaginary world and everyday reality is paralleled in other cultures that preceded and followed. Ancient Mesopotamian, Babylonian, and Near Eastern myths present remarkable points of comparison with the Greek materials, perhaps the most important of which is the cosmological organization depicted in these myths. As in the Greek conception of the world, Mesopotamian and Near Eastern myths divide the world either in three parts, namely earth, heaven, and underground water, or in four parts, namely earth, heaven, sea, and Underworld.³² Water, especially underground water, plays an important role in this worldview. On an eighth-or seventh-century Babylonian map preserved on a clay tablet, the world is encircled by a salty river, the *marratum*. Despite being salty, the *marratum* recalls the Greek Ocean, especially because it divides the different regions of the world according to light levels or sailing distance, which is reminiscent of the different regions visited by Odysseus in the *Odyssey*.³³ Moreover, in Mesopotamian cosmology, Apsu, the underground river, is the point of origin of all the rivers of the earth. This role of Apsu can be compared to the role of Oceanus in the *Theogony* 337–62, since Oceanus is also the father of all rivers. While Apsu is located underground and Oceanus encircles the earth, we note that in the *Theogony*, Styx, the river of the Underworld, is the most important daughter of Oceanus, thereby showing the strong ties between the Ocean and the Underworld. In fact, according to West, the epithet ἀψόροος “back-flowing” echoes the name of Apsu, the Underworld water, and may therefore show a close similarity between Greek and Mesopotamian cosmology on this point.³⁴ Furthermore, in the Babylonian theogony *Enūma Eliš*, Apsu and his consort Tiamat are said to be the parents of all the gods, a role that parallels the Homeric assertion that Oceanus is the father of the gods and Tethys a cosmic mother (*Il.* 14.246; 14.201 = 14.302).³⁵ In this way, water connects the different parts of the world, whether real or imaginary, in both Greek and Near Eastern traditions.

Another point of comparison between Greek cosmology and its Eastern counter parts is the description of the residence of the dead as located under the earth.³⁶ Upon death, one must descend to the Underworld. Yet, to get there, one must cross a river, as does Odysseus in the *Nekyia* by crossing the Ocean, or as others do by crossing the Acheron in a descent to Hades.³⁷ Similarly, Gilgamesh must cross the waters of death to find the residence of Ut-napishtim and the plant of immortality.³⁸ This “river of death” finds parallels in Babylonian literature as the “Hubur” and in the Old Testament as the “Watercourse” (šelah).³⁹ Furthermore, in both Greek and Semitic tradition, dying is associated with the West, either the western Ocean or crossing a river in a westerly direction. In fact, as Martin L. West suggests, the Greek word Ἀχέρων “the river Acheron” is almost identical in sound with the Hebrew word *’ahārôn*, which can mean “western.”⁴⁰ Thus, in both Greek and Near Eastern mythologies, a westerly body of water is the point of transition between life and death, and thus from the ordinary world to the imaginary lands that lie beyond the limitations of mortality.

Water is also a point of transition between life and death in the myth of the flood, which is shared across Near Eastern and Greek cultures.⁴¹ In Greco-Roman tradition, Zeus decides to exterminate the human race with a flood because of its wickedness at the end of the Bronze Age.⁴² Alternatively, Zeus concludes this because of Lycaon's practice of human sacrifice.⁴³ According to Plato, this flood caused the destruction of Atlantis and the paradisiacal lifestyle it supported.⁴⁴ Similarly, Enlil, the king of the gods in the Akkadian epic *Atrahasis* and in the epic of Gilgamesh, chooses to wipe humanity out. In these accounts, human beings have become numerous and noisy and disturb Enlil's rest. Finally, in the Old Testament, Yahweh decides to clear the earth of humanity because of its violence and wickedness. In all cases, one righteous man survives the flood, namely Deucalion, Ut-napishtim, and Noah, respectively. These men and their wives then start humanity afresh through their descendants, as in the case of Noah and his wife, through their fellow travelers, as in the case of Ut-napishtim and his wife, or through casting stones upon the earth, as in the case of Deucalion and Pyrrha. All these narratives are so closely related that few scholars doubt the derivation of the Greek version from a Semitic source.⁴⁵ In all cases, we observe that water plays an ambiguous role in these stories. It is an agent of destruction and renewal, and therefore exhibits the same paradoxical qualities we noted earlier in Greek epic. In the flood stories, water is also an instrument of divine vengeance and serves to punish men for their wickedness. In this way, it is a medium of communication between humans and gods.

In the Roman period, the sea continues to represent an ambiguous force that brings both chaos and renewal. As Evans notes, Pliny the Elder describes the encircling river Ocean as a terrifying expanse of water that violently invades the *mare interiora* (i.e., the Mediterranean) and constantly reshapes the coastline by eroding entire regions.⁴⁶ Yet, the Ocean, especially understood as the Atlantic, is also a vehicle to extend Roman power to distant regions. According to Florus 2.13, Caesar paraded a representation of the Ocean as a defeated captive in his Gallic triumph in order to show that he conquered farther-off lands than any other Roman general.⁴⁷ In the same line of thought, Vergil thinks of the Ocean as a new world where Augustus's power can be extended.⁴⁸ In contrast to the ambition attached to the Ocean in these texts, Cicero, caught in the midst of the Civil War a generation earlier, imagines the Ocean as a place of retreat from tyranny where philosophers are free to devote themselves to their studies.⁴⁹ Cicero pictures this paradise as located on the Islands of the Blessed, similar to the islands of the Ocean later imagined by Plutarch and Avienus, where Cronus reigns over a Golden Age.⁵⁰ In political terms, the Romans thought of the sea, and especially the outer Ocean, as a geographical pathway to new lands. However, under the pressure of severe crisis, they also considered the outer sea as a point of contact with another reality and another time, so far away as to escape the miseries of their world.

The Christian Middle Ages inherited these notions in a blend of traditions from Antiquity and Celtic lore.⁵¹ This fusion of cultures and beliefs is nowhere more evident than in the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis*. The *Navigatio* belongs to the broader Irish genre of *Imrama*, or tales of fantastic navigation inherited in part from Antiquity and in part from Celtic folklore.⁵² Saint Brendan of Clonfert was a fifth-century Irish abbot whose travels in the North Atlantic attained legendary status in the Middle Ages. By the ninth century, the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis* circulated widely across Europe and was translated in multiple languages. In the narrative, Brendan and his monks leave Ireland in search of a paradisiacal island called the Promised Land of the Saints. In the course of their journey, they visit a variety of islands and locales, many of which recall biblical episodes. For instance, the monks visit an island where repenting fallen angels spend time away from Purgatory and a rock where the traitor Judas is released from the torments of Hell on Sundays. Other locations recall Odyssean episodes, such as the island

of Hell, from which uncouth smiths throw molten metal at the monks. The lumps of metal cause great waves in the sea that threaten to capsize the monks' ship, much in the way the boulder thrown by Polyphemus almost capsizes Odysseus's ship. Finally, Brendan's Island of Paradise recalls the ancient legends of the western Ocean. The island has a mild climate, food grows of its own accord, and the sun never sets, exactly as Pindar, Pliny, and Mela, among many others, describe the Islands of the Blessed.⁵³

This concept of paradise is further blended with Celtic legends in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini* (908–40). Geoffrey relates that at the Battle of Camlann, King Arthur is gravely wounded and taken to Avalon, more or less the Celtic equivalent of the Islands of the Blessed.⁵⁴ It is fertile, without the need for toil, is sunny, and sees two summer seasons and two harvests every year. In Geoffrey's narrative, Arthur is taken to Avalon to recover from his wounds. He is not dead, but rather in between life and death. In this state, Arthur comes to Avalon guided by Merlin and Barinthus, the same Barinthus who, in the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis*, has already been to the Promised Land of the Saints and encourages Brendan to sail for paradise. In this way, Geoffrey blends the *Navigatio* with other Celtic medieval narratives and equates Avalon to the Promised Land of the Saints, which is none other than the ancient Island(s) of the Blessed. In all these tales, we note that the sea plays the same role as a point of escape from reality into another world. In particular, it is a point of escape from mortality, as Brendan finds a paradise reserved for the afterlife and Arthur recovers from devastating wounds. Some even believed that Arthur would one day return from Avalon to his kingdom.

This imaginary geography was adopted and integrated to the medieval picture of the world. The paradisiacal islands imagined to lie in the Atlantic became known as the Island(s) of Saint Brendan. The Hereford map (ca. 1300) depicts six Islands of the Blessed in the western Ocean near which a legend reads, "Fortunatae insulee sex sunt insule Sancti Brendani" ("The six Fortunate islands are the islands of Saint Brendan").⁵⁵ The same connection occurs on the contemporary Ebstorf map, which reads, "Insula Perdita. Hanc invenit Scs. Brandanus, a qua cum navigasset, a nullo hominum postea est inventa" ("The Lost Island. Saint Brendan discovered it, and after he sailed away from it, no one ever found it again").⁵⁶ In this way, the Hereford and Ebstorf mapmakers not only blend ancient and medieval traditions, but also emphasize the inaccessibility that is attached to the paradisiacal places beyond the sea. Brendan's island is a place of divine revelation, which must therefore remain inaccessible to ordinary men in the same way as ancient myths present the Ocean as inaccessible to all living mortals.

This notion was tested in the Age of Discovery, when sailors attempted to find the paradisiacal island of Saint Brendan. The Canaries (whose modern name is derived from the ancient name of one of the Fortunate Islands, Canaria) were explored in successive waves starting in 1312. From there, sailors launched expeditions to the elusive island of Saint Brendan, which was rumored to contain an abundance of precious stones and other marvels. Pedro Vello, a Portuguese pilot, even claimed that he landed on the island in the sixteenth century.⁵⁷ However, after exploring the island, Vello and his comrades had to return to their ship in a hurry because a hurricane was threatening the island. The ship was blown away, and Vello could never find the island again. Similarly, at about the same time, a Franciscan monk claimed to have seen the island of Saint Brendan from Tenerife through a telescope. However, when he tried to show it to his friend, a cloud obscured the horizon and the marvelous sight disappeared forever.⁵⁸ In both cases, the marvelous island remains inaccessible by boat or even by sight, as if to prove that divine blessings cannot be attained during the course of mortal life. In this way, the sea marks the frontier that separates men from their most unattainable yearnings and thus defines the human condition.

State of the Question

Many broad-ranging studies have addressed the topic of the sea in Greek literature and culture, whether as a specialized monograph or as part of an inquiry into ancient geography and the techniques of sailing. Duane Roller's recent book *Through the Pillars of Herakles* has now become the preferred reference on the history of geographical exploration in Antiquity, adding to the wealth of knowledge already collected in John B. Harley and David Woodward's *History of Cartography*. More recently still, Jean-Nicolas Corvisier offers a survey of Greek attitudes to the sea in *Les Grecs et la mer*. Corvisier takes a chronological approach to describe the Greeks' uneasy relationship to the sea, from Hesiod and Homer's anguish to the mastery of the sea displayed in the Classical period. Throughout the book, Corvisier pays particular attention to commercial interests, food production, and military conquest, three powerful motivations that drove the Greeks toward the sea and thus fueled the rise of artistic and religious manifestations in relation to the sea.

These geographical and historical studies are aptly complemented by inquiries into the mentalities that informed Greek geography and cosmology. Albin Lesky was the first to attempt such a study with his book *Thalatta: Der Weg der Griechen zum Meer*. Lesky explores the Greeks' relationship to the sea and attributes their changing attitude, from the fear of the Archaic age to the mastery of the sea in the Classical period, to the Greeks' adaptation from their landlocked Indo-European homeland to their new coastal settlements on the Greek peninsula. Despite the highly speculative nature of these claims, Lesky provides a useful, wide-ranging survey of Greek literary and artistic depictions of the sea and seafaring.

Much more recently, James Romm published his influential book *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought*. Romm foregrounds geographical literature as a genre and analyzes the influence of geographical narratives on other literary productions. As Romm demonstrates, the sea is a boundless space that captivates the Greeks' imagination and thus plays an important part in geographical narratives. Writers utilize the sea as a setting to talk about the farthest reaches of the cosmos and the infinite numbers of uncanny characters and landscapes that can be created in these inaccessible regions. In this way, the sea allows writers to discuss not only the shape of the world, but also and especially all the humans—and nonhumans—who inhabit this world. Empirical geography thus overlaps with imaginary geography and ethnography.

Heinz-Günther Nesselrath takes up these issues in an important article published in 2005, "Where the Lord of the Sea Grants Passage to Sailors through the Deep-Blue Mere No More: The Greeks and the Western Seas." Nesselrath systematically explores the literary traditions attached to the western Ocean, in particular the relationship between mythical journeys on the Ocean and actual voyages of exploration. Nesselrath demonstrates that despite considerable evolution from the Archaic to the Roman period, the notions attached to the western Ocean, especially paradisiacal islands outside the reach of mortal time, remained remarkably consistent in Greek literature.

When reading these studies, one inevitably grapples with the question of water. How did the Greeks think about water? Was seawater special? Why do so many myths speak of mortals who achieved immortality by diving into the sea? René Ginouvès pioneered the question in his book *Balaneutikè: Recherches sur le bain dans l'antiquité grecque*.⁵⁹ By focusing on bathing, Ginouvès explores not only cleansing and purification rituals, but also the religious significance of bathing. Indeed, for the Greeks, cleansing the body can also, in certain circumstances, cleanse the soul. Thus, Ginouvès proposes that when the initiates in the Great Eleusinian Mysteries rush into the sea, shouting, ἄλαδε μύστα! "Into the sea, initiates!," they cleanse themselves in preparation for the revelations of the

mystery cult by symbolically drowning in the water. This ritual death prepares the initiates to attain a new level of consciousness. In this way, Ginouvès emphasizes the ambivalent nature of water as a pure, life-sustaining element and a symbol for death. This question is crucial to the present study of the sea as an intermediary between life, death, and immortality.

The ambivalence of the sea with respect to life and death was explored in fuller detail by Jean Rudhardt in *Le thème de l'eau primordiale dans la mythologie grecque*. Rudhardt proposes that water, in particular that of the outer Ocean, was the primordial element from which all else sprung in Greek thought. Thus, Oceanic water was the life-giving element par excellence. It even sustained the eternal life of the gods beyond the borders of the mortal world by entering in the composition of ambrosia, the magical drink of the gods. Yet this life-giving force remained on the margins of the world, inaccessible to mortals except after death. The Ocean thus marks the boundary between the mortal and immortal worlds, or visible and invisible realities.

Rudhardt's study mostly omits the fact that myths present this boundary as permeable, either through the Ocean or through the sea. This question was addressed by Clara Gallini in her article "Katapontismos," in which she proposes that immersions warrant initiation, either into a new age group, as in the case of Theseus, or into the company of the gods, as in the cases of Ino and Glaucus. However, despite her important insights, Gallini's attempt at a systematic analysis of immersion through categorization fails to account for an important group of myths and images where transcendence is achieved not by immersion, but by sailing or flying over the Ocean, as in the cases of Perseus and Heracles. In fact, Gallini admits that the myths and imagery of sea crossings are so diverse that any attempt at a broad-ranging interpretation would be like fitting the materials onto a Procrustean bed.⁶⁰

For this reason, scholars have mostly dealt with the transcendent role of the sea in small-scale studies that address only one aspect of the question. For instance, in her book *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry*, Emily Vermeule emphasizes the important role of the sea in funerary poetry and iconography, where the dead are portrayed as sailing or flying above the sea to reach the afterlife.⁶¹ Maria Daraki, in "Oinops Pontos: La mer dionysiaque," proposes that in Dionysiac contexts, the sea is a two-way passage between the world of the living and the world of the dead. An important instance of this concept is found in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, where Dionysus himself descends to the Underworld through a marsh. Finally, Jean-Paul Descoeudres studies dolphins in Dionysiac iconography in his article "Les dauphins de Dionysos." Descoeudres proposes that in Dionysiac contexts, dolphins represent the transition experienced by Dionysus's worshippers when coming into contact with the god.

All these studies offer important insights but fail to tie their findings together by asking broad-ranging questions concerning the role of the sea in Greek myths, especially within the dynamic relationship between real and imaginary geography. This book takes up the issue by proposing that the sea is a mediating space in Greek mythology. It separates the visible and the invisible worlds and marks the difference between men, gods, and the dead. As an intermediary space, the sea integrates elements of all the areas it separates. For this reason, the Greeks characterize the sea as both fertile and barren, as a directionless path, and as a deadly force that can nonetheless lead to immortal life. The tension felt in these ambiguous images is emphasized in a variety of myths and artistic depictions that is so vast as to render any attempt at comprehensiveness ineffective.⁶² For this reason, the present book consists of six case studies, all of which address the role of the sea as a boundary between the visible and invisible world, or between the world of humans, the gods, and the dead. Each chapter emphasizes the mediating role of the sea in a particular set of cosmological concepts or in a group of stories, such as stories of male

and female coming-of-age, divinization by diving into the sea, or Dionysiac revelation. In this way, wide-ranging questions about the role of the sea in the Greek worldview can be explored without the need for (or impediment of) a comprehensive account.

Method

To be effective, such a study must consider each of the selected myths or documents in its own context and then show the connections and differences between them. This process reveals the internal consistency of the culture while also highlighting the variations within it, such as chronological evolution. The study of the myth of Danae presented in [Chapter 3](#) exemplifies this method. Danae was first understood as a tragic figure, which is why Sophocles compares her to Antigone. In the Hellenistic period, Apollonius of Rhodes compares Medea to Danae, Antiope, and Metope, who betrayed their fathers' authority to have an affair with a stranger. In typical Hellenistic fashion, the comparison emphasizes individuality and passion, unlike the earlier portrayal of Danae. Finally, Ovid and Propertius mockingly accuse Danae of selling herself, which, for these poets, explains Zeus's appearance as a shower of gold. This interpretation recalls Roman myths such as that of Tarpeia, who betrayed Rome for golden jewelry. Thus, Danae's journey first evokes pity in the Classical period, while in later times it is interpreted as a punishment for her actions, cast in the specific cultural context of each work.

Despite this evolution, the myth consistently remains attached to marriage, and Danae's tribulations reflect the anguish associated with this difficult transition. In the Classical period, Aeschylus portrays Danae's landing on Seriphos after her sea crossing as a wedding to Silenus—a nightmare of a marriage. In Apollonius of Rhodes, the story of Danae is presented as an argument to let Medea marry Jason, a union that will have dreadful consequences. Finally, in the Roman period, Danae represents the opposite of a married woman, namely, a prostitute. In each case, writers use the figure of Danae for specific purposes within their work and their society. Yet the myth carries consistent associations through the centuries, and Danae's encounter with Zeus and her sea crossing are always tied to a failed marriage.

Theoretical frameworks are useful in such a study, but only to a certain extent. For instance, Burkert's well-known model of "the girl's tragedy" can help discern an important group of myths that reflect the same cultural preoccupations as the myth of Danae, such as the myths of Callisto, Auge, Io, Tyro, Melanippe, and Antiope.⁶³ Burkert identifies five stages within these narratives: (1) departure from home, (2) period of retirement, (3) first intercourse, (4) period of suffering, and (5) birth of a child and rescue. Burkert argues that these stories reflect biological facts associated with a girl's transformation into a woman, such as the first menstruation, first intercourse, and pregnancy. In his view, the stories are tragic because they are part of the larger complex of sacrifice to which rites of initiation such as the Arrhephoria also belong. Thus, by ritually and symbolically sacrificing young girls, the community comes to grips with their transformation into adult women, and the girls, by going through a symbolic death, accomplish their transition to adulthood. Burkert's scheme is attractive because it explains the inherently tragic nature of all Greek stories of girls' coming-of-age. According to him, a girl must endure hardships and be "sacrificed" to attain the fullness of womanhood. In turn, this also explains the particular attention that poets such as Simonides, Pindar, and the Tragics paid to these myths, as the stories were particularly appropriate for odes, dithyrambs, and tragedies. Yet, relying solely on Burkert's model—or any other model that focuses strictly on the narrative scheme—tends to obscure the treatment of the myth in individual documents, which are each motivated by their own

local and chronological context, authorial intent, and performative circumstances.

Furthermore, such narrative models obscure the differences between myths that share the same basic structure. For instance, the story of Auge, on the surface, is all but identical to the story of Danae. Both girls are prevented from marrying by their fathers, both are imprisoned in a secluded location, both are raped by gods, and both are cast out to sea in chests with their infant sons. For this reason, it is tempting, and indeed instructive, to follow Burkert and interpret the myths as instances of the “girl’s tragedy.” Yet a close examination of the sources reveals important differences in the myths. Danae is the sole heiress of her father’s estate, while Auge has brothers. Both their sons, Perseus and Telephus, are destined to kill the legitimate holders of the estates, namely Acrisius (Danae’s father) and the Aleads, Auge’s brothers. The inheritance crisis is resolved in widely different ways. Danae is cast out and never marries, while Auge marries the king of Mysia, Teuthras, after landing on his shores. Eventually, Perseus returns to Argos and claims his grandfather’s throne, while Telephus remains in Mysia and becomes Teuthras’s heir. Thus, while the two myths are “girl’s tragedies” and discuss issues of marriage and succession, the myth of Danae speaks of a failed marriage and the myth of Auge presents a successful transition. In both cases, a passage at sea underscores the girls’ final separation from home, but in one case it is disastrous, while in the other it is ultimately positive, marking the necessity of such a separation to ensure the peaceful succession of generations. Accordingly, a mixed approach to myth and cultural constructs, which takes overall narrative structures into account but also gives a large place to the specifics of each story and each retelling, is beneficial.

For the same reason, a mixture of synchronic and diachronic approaches is also desirable. Synchronic approaches offer a way to delve deep into a single concept or myth by comparing documents from the same time and/or place. For this reason, such an approach is employed throughout the book, as for instance in [Chapter 2](#) to explore Pindar and Bacchylides’ use of sea crossings to illustrate the political and social consequences of male coming-of-age. The poets present the figures of Perseus, Theseus, and Jason as models for political leadership. The young men’s sea crossings and exploits on the other side of the world are presented as a victory over death that affirms the young men’s identity and allows them to take the political leadership of a kingdom. These myths are put in direct parallel with the political situations Pindar and Bacchylides are celebrating in their poems. *Pythian* 10 glorifies inherited excellence and the peaceful succession of generations in the Thessalian ruling dynasty. Bacchylides Ode 17 emphasizes the rise of Athenian hegemony at the time of the formation of the Delian League. Finally, *Pythian* 4 uses the Argonautic myth to justify aristocratic rule at Cyrene and promote social concord. In all three cases, the heroes’ sea crossings are placed in relation with nautical metaphors that express political ideas, such as the image of the “ship of state” in which aristocrats are the pilots of government in the sea of communal life.

By contrast, diachronic approaches allow for a multidirectional look at a concept or myth through the centuries. Such an approach is taken in [Chapter 5](#) in exploring the conceptions attached to diving into the sea in Greek mythology. In the Archaic and Classical periods, diving is used as a metaphor to illustrate a complete loss of mental control, as when someone falls in love, tackles a bewildering problem, or even dies. In the Hellenistic and Roman periods, diving remains connected to a loss of mental control, but is mainly used in stories of unrequited love where—with typical Hellenistic pathos—a rejected or abandoned lover throws himself or herself into the sea in a frenzy of passion. In many of these stories, the lovers are transformed into aquatic birds by the mercy of the gods, who thus resolve the crisis at hand. A diachronic approach allows observing the constants in the concept through the centuries while highlighting the specifics of each instance and the tastes of each era. Furthermore, a diachronic approach allows for a

retrospective understanding of the concept of diving as a whole. The metamorphoses into aquatic birds of the Hellenistic period emphasize the mental transformation that is attached to diving into the sea throughout Antiquity. By diving into the sea, one symbolically resolves a psychological tension that the mortal mind cannot comprehend or assuage, such as falling in love, solving a moral problem, or, the most incomprehensible of all, passing from life to death.

Overall, as Buxton argues, a middle or mixed course between chronology and narrative structure allows for an in-depth look at Greek mythological language, images, and conventions.⁶⁴ Sometimes, due to the fragmentary nature of our sources, such a middle course is our only option. Other times, a rich dossier of documents can be approached in multiple ways and thus yields a multifaceted view of a multifaceted question. Like the sea itself, Greek myths changed and evolved, yet conserved immutable characteristics. The space between these opposites is fertile ground for scholarship.

CHAPTER 1



Figure 1. Attic red-figure kylix, 510–500 BC. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 01.8024. Henry Lillie Pierce Fund. Photo: © 2015 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

The Sea as a Roadway

The ancient Greek language contains many words that express the concept of the sea: πέλαγος, ἄλς/ἄλμη, θάλασσα, and πόντος. Of these, ἄλς/ἄλμη, πέλαγος, and θάλασσα denote salt water,² the high sea,³ and the sea as an expanse of water,⁴ respectively. Although these terms designate different aspects of the sea, they are used in a consistent manner to express the ambivalent conceptions attached to the sea in the Greek imagination. For this reason, the term “sea” is used in this book to designate the marine space in general.

In Greek literature, the sea is described as an immense, boundless space.⁵ This characteristic is expressed in Homeric expressions such as ἀπείρονα πόντον “the boundless sea” (e.g., *Il.* 1.350), εὐρέα πόντον “the broad sea” (e.g., *Il.* 6.291), πόντος ἀπείριτος “the boundless sea” (e.g., *Od.* 10.195), ἐπ’ εὐρέα νῶτα θαλάσσης “on the broad back of the sea” (e.g., *Il.* 20.229), πέλαγος μέγα μετρήσαντες “having traversed the vast sea” (*Od.* 3.179), and θαλάσσης εὐρέα κόλπον “the broad bosom of the sea” (*Il.* 18.140). The immense depth of the sea is also emphasized in expressions such as μέγα λαῖτμα θαλάσσης “the great depth of the sea” (e.g., *Od.* 4.504), βαθείης ἐξ ἁλός “out of the deep sea” (e.g., *Il.* 13.44), ἐν βένθεσσιν ἁλός “in the depths of the sea” (*Il.* 18.36), and ἁλὸς πολυβενθέος “the very deep sea” (*Od.* 4.406). Both the vastness and the depth of the sea induce fear, as for instance when it is called μεγακήτεα πόντον “the sea teeming with

monsters" (*Od.* 3.158), πόντον ἀμείλιχον "the implacable sea" (*Hom. Hymn. Diosc.* 8), δεινούς κόλπους ἄλως ἀτρυγέτοιο "the terrible bosom of the barren sea" (*Od.* 5.52), or μέγα λαίτμα θαλάσσης δεινόν τ' ἀργαλέον "the great depth of the sea, terrible and difficult" (*Od.* 5.174).

The sea is also moving and noisy, as in the many Homeric expressions that describe its waves, such as πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης "of the loud-roaring sea" (e.g., *Il.* 1.134), κατὰ πόντον ἀπείρονα κυμαίνοντα "on the boundless and swelling sea" (*Od.* 4.510), πολυκλύστῳ ἐνὶ πόντῳ "on the stormy sea" (e.g., *Od.* 4.354), and ὥς τε μέγα κύμα θαλάσσης εὐρυπόροιο "like a great wave of the broadwayed sea" (*Il.* 15.381). Perhaps because the sea is in constant movement and because it reflects light, the color of the sea is indefinite. It is gray (πολὺς, e.g., *Il.* 1.350), misty (ἡεροειδέα, e.g., *Il.* 23.744), black (μείλανι, e.g., *Il.* 24.79), purple (πορφυρέην, e.g., *Il.* 16.391), violet-colored (ιοειδέα, e.g., *Il.* 11.298), or, rather enigmatically, "wine-dark" (οἶνοπα, e.g., *Il.* 2.613). Perhaps these changing colors designate the purple and pink hues that the sea takes at sunset and at dawn, its gray surface on cloudy days, and its deep blackness at night.⁶

The indefinite color, together with the constant movement of the water and the refraction of light on its surface, prompts a comparison between the sea and marble: ἄλα μαρμαρέην "the marbled sea" (*Il.* 14.273). This expression is particularly revealing, since the adjective μαρμαρέος generally means "flashing, gleaming" and is used to describe objects as diverse as Zeus's aegis (*Il.* 17.594), celestial bodies (ἄστρον, *Orph.* fr. 168.13), polished marble steles (*IG XIV* 1603), and the eyes of Aether in Aristophanes' *Clouds* 287. In this way, the epithet μαρμαρέην suggests that the sea is shining like divine objects and bodies, while having an ambiguous materiality, since μαρμαρέος can apply to solid as well as to ethereal bodies. Likewise, the sea is made of water, but because ships can sail on its surface, it can be compared to solid objects such as metal or stone. A similar idea may be expressed in the epithet δῖαν (ἄλα δῖαν "the bright sea," e.g., *Il.* 1.141). The adjective δῖος is usually associated with the sky and the divine beings that reside there, as in the expression δῖος γένος "divine stock" (e.g., *Il.* 9.538). Yet δῖος can characterize incorporeal objects such as the air (e.g., αἰθέρος ἐκ δῖης "through the bright air," *Il.* 16.365) or solid surfaces such as the earth (e.g., χθὼν δῖα "the divine earth," *Il.* 14.347). When applied to the sea, the epithet δῖαν describes the reflection of heavenly light on the moving surface of the water, which is both liquid and solid. The bright light of the sky makes the sea shine like a star, which perhaps also hints at its divine nature. The close association of sky and sea through this epithet may also express the unsettling feeling, when navigating out of sight of the coast, of being lost between two boundless spaces.

All these ways of describing the sea emphasize its indefinite, sometimes even paradoxical character. The sea is an immense space in which sailors can lose their way and wander like Odysseus. The sea offers no fixed points of reference, since it does not retain its shape but moves constantly. The sea does not even have a definite color, since it merely reflects the color of the sky above it, leaving the abyss below dark and invisible. In fact, the sea has an altogether ambiguous spatial orientation and materiality. It is a solid horizontal plane and a liquid vertical abyss, a surface on which to sail forward and a chasm in which to sink down.

This paradox is further expressed in the comparison of the sea to a road. The sea was an important path of communication and trade in the Greek world. Sea travel pervaded every aspect of life, such as commerce, politics, food production, cultural exchange, religion, and technological progress. Accordingly, the sea often appears in metaphors where it is represented as a path or road, as in the expression ὕγρα κέλευθα "the watery ways" (e.g., *Od.* 3.71), ἰχθυόεντα κέλευθα "the fish-filled ways" (e.g., *Od.* 3.177), ἡρόεντα κέλευθα "the misty ways" (*Od.* 20.64), εὐρώεντα κέλευθα "the dank ways" (*Od.* 24.10), πόρους ἄλως "the paths of the sea" (e.g., *Od.* 12.259), and θαλάσσης εὐρυπόροιο "of the

broad-wayed sea” (e.g., *Il.* 15.381). In the *Odyssey*, 9.260, Odysseus gives an account of his trials on the paths of the sea: παντοίοις ἀνέμοισιν ὑπὲρ μέγα λαΐτμα θαλάσσης, οἴκαδε ἰέμενοι, ἄλλην ὁδὸν ἄλλα κέλευθα ἤλθομεν “we [were driven] by all sorts of winds over the great chasm of the sea, wishing for home, and we went on this and that road.” In this way, Odysseus expresses both the fear associated with the vast abyss of the sea and its conception as a road.

The paths of the sea are fraught with danger, and Archaic poetry often associates the metaphor with death and suffering, especially by being lost at sea.⁷ The *Odyssey* begins with a description of the perils Odysseus suffered at sea, especially his errantry and suffering: ὃς μάλα πολλὰ πλάγχθη “he who wandered very much” (*Od.* 1.1–2); πολλὰ δ’ ὃ γ’ ἐν πόντῳ πάθεν ἄλγεα ὃν κατὰ θυμόν “he suffered many woes in his heart on the sea” (*Od.* 1.4). Hesiod’s famous description of the evils of sea travel in the *Works and Days* 610–95 also comes to mind. Solon 13.43–45 (West) describes the miseries of seeking profit by trading over the sea: ὁ μὲν κατὰ πόντον ἀλάται ἐν νηυσὶν χρήζων οἴκαδε κέρδος ἄγειν ἰχθυόεντ’ ἀνέμοισι φορεόμενος ἀργαλείοισιν “one, seeking to bring home some gain, roams the fish-filled sea tossed around by perilous winds.” Thus the sea is a path, but one that is strewn with obstacles, has an uncertain course, and has an uncertain end. Unlike those on land, the paths of the sea have no fixed points of reference and their trajectory is unpredictable.

These characteristics of the sea are personified in the figures of the Titan Pontus and his children. In the Hesiodic poems, Pontus is depicted as vast,⁸ barren,⁹ salty and bitter,¹⁰ agitated by violent storms and waves,¹¹ and misty.¹² His children Phorcys, Nereus, Thaumás, Eurybie, and Kêto all present a generally hostile character as well as a misshapen or giant physical form.¹³ Eurybie “broad violence” designates the vastness of the sea and the strength of its currents. Thaumás “the astounding” represents the astonishing and frightening marvels often imagined at sea, and Kêto “the sea monster” personifies sea monsters. Finally, the Old Men of the Sea Phorcys and Nereus are shape-shifters, thereby indicating the constant change of colors and weather on the sea and the resulting disorientation of sailors. In addition, Phorcys and Nereus have prophetic powers and despite their unwillingness—reflecting the difficulty of sea-travel—they occasionally reveal the way home to lost sailors such as Heracles and Menelaus.¹⁴ Overall, Pontus and his children represent the sea as a vast and dangerous space in which men can easily lose direction. Nonetheless, the depths of the sea also conceal some creatures endowed with divine knowledge from whom persevering sailors can receive revelations.

The characterization of the sea as a dangerous road may be connected to the core meaning of the Greek word πόντος “the sea.” The word πόντος derives from a Proto-Indo-European (PIE) root **pent-*, which refers to a passageway from one shore to another, especially one that is difficult to cross.¹⁵ Indo-Iranian cognates of the word, for instance Sanskrit pântāḥ, designate a path strewn with obstacles. The same PIE root also yields Greek πατεῖν “to walk,” Latin *pons* “bridge,” and English *path*, all of which relate to the idea of crossing a distance or, as in the case of pons, an obstacle.¹⁶ The sea is a space of contradictions where the potential for discovery, exchange, and communication is counterbalanced by an equal potential for eternal wandering and death.

The poet of the *Theognidea* 245–50 (West) uses this paradox of the sea to illustrate communication that takes place *beyond* death.

οὐδέποτ’ οὐδὲ θανὼν ἀπολεῖς κλέος, ἀλλὰ μελήσεις
 ἄφθιτον ἀνθρώποις· αἰὲν ἔχων ὄνομα,
 Κόρνε, καθ’ Ἑλλάδα γῆν στρωφόμενος, ἡδ’ ἀνὰ νήσους
 ἰχθυόεντα περὶ πόντον ἐπ’ ἀτρύγετον,
 οὐχ ἵππων νώτοισιν ἐφήμενος· ἀλλὰ σε πέμψει
 ἀγλαὰ Μουσῶν δῶρα ἰοστεφάνων.

You will never lose your glory, not even when you are dead, but you will always be a subject of concern and your name will be immortal among men, Kyrnos; you will constantly roam about the land of Greece and the islands, crossing the barren fish-filled sea; you will not be riding on the back of horses, but the gifts of the Muses crowned with violets will send you on.

According to the poem, the sea will provide a path of communication between Kyrnos and all the men who live in the land of Greece (Ελλάδα γῆν) and on the islands (νῆσους) even after the boy's death. Through the power of poetry, Kyrnos's glory will avoid the perils of the sea and spread to all of Greece. In fact, Kyrnos's name will be spread not only across the sea and the geographical landscape of Greece, but also through time, making him a matter of concern to future generations (future tense: μελήσεις). The sea that divides countries and continents is also a connecting pathway, even across the barrier of mortality. By offering a space of communication and exchange, the sea connects different peoples and nations, and it also connects the living with the dead.¹⁷ The sea thus enables communication in space as well as in time, connecting men across death and into eternal time.

Waterways to the Invisible

The mythical hydrological network reflects the function of the sea as a space of communication between mortal life, death, and immortality. Indeed, the sea occupies an intermediary position between the earth inhabited by mortal men and the Ocean, the encircling river at the edge of the world beyond which are found Hades and the residences of the gods. Odysseus reaches the Ocean by sailing from the easternmost point of the Mediterranean to its westernmost side. Odysseus starts from the island of Circe, which is said to be near the palace of the Dawn and where the sun rises every morning (*Od.* 12.3–4). He then sails northwest to reach the land of the Cimmerians, where the sun never shines, and finds the entrance to Hades close by (*Od.* 11.14–19). Odysseus then follows the course of Oceanus clockwise around the world to return to the extreme East, to Circe's island.¹⁸ In this way, Odysseus sails from one side of the world to another by following the circular course of the Ocean. Heracles also reaches the Ocean by sailing westward. In Pindar, fr. 256 (Snell), Heracles is said to pass through the Gates of Gadir (Cadiz) in his journey to the farthest reaches of the sea: εἰς Πύλας Γαδειρίδας ... ὑστάτας ἀφίχθαι ... τὸν Ἡρακλέα “towards the Gates of Gadir ... [that] Heracles ... arrived to the furthest...” Despite the scantiness of the fragment, we gather that Pindar is evoking the episode of Heracles' navigation from the Mediterranean to the extreme West in search of the cattle of Geryon. Indeed, according to Apollodorus 2.5.10, Gadeira is another name for Erytheia, the island of Geryon. Gadeira is also the ancient name of the city of Cadiz just outside the straits leading from the Mediterranean into the Atlantic. In the same passage, Apollodorus adds that Heracles set up the pillars that mark the boundary between Europe and Africa as tokens of this trip, which became known as the Pillars of Heracles (the Strait of Gibraltar).¹⁹ In this way, Heracles passes outside of the Mediterranean to reach the Ocean. Finally, in the East, the Ocean can be accessed from the Black Sea, as Jason does in Pindar *Pythian* 4.251. Thus, on its horizontal plane, the sea provides access to the Ocean and the world beyond the mortal realm.

On its vertical axis, the sea is also an intermediary between the worlds of the living, the dead, and the gods. Indeed, the bottom of the sea houses the palace of Poseidon, Amphitrite, and the Nereids, as described by Bacchylides 17.97–116. Other marine divinities such as Nereus, Proteus, Thetis, and Leucothea also live in the depths of the sea.

These divinities are well known to come into contact with sailors in distress, such as Odysseus and Menelaus. Odysseus is saved by Leucothea as he is about to drown in a storm (5.333–38), while Menelaus questions Proteus to find his way home to Sparta (*Od.* 4.333–570). Mortals can contact these gods by deliberately giving themselves over to the divinity and jumping into the sea, as does Theseus in Bacchylides 17, who seemingly resigns to a certain death when he dives into the open sea. Nonetheless, the hero meets Amphitrite at the bottom of the sea and returns to the surface unscathed. The hero Enalus performs a similar feat when he jumps into the sea to rescue his beloved, and as a result he contemplates the palace of Poseidon under the sea.²⁰ In this way, the sea is a space of communication between mortals and immortals.²¹ Exchange between the two categories takes place when mortals have reached the very limits of their lives and are about to die.

In fact, the vertical axis of the sea may lead to Hades altogether. Lycophron *Alexandra* 115–27 describes a tunnel leading to Hades under the sea and calls it οἶμος “a road,” which recalls the common metaphor of the sea as a pathway. Lycophron tells the story of Proteus, the son of Poseidon and king of Egypt.²² Proteus is dismayed at the savagery of his Thracian sons, Polygonus and Telegonus, who challenge all passers-by to a wrestling match and kill them, exhibiting the violence and monstrosity that is common in the lineage of Poseidon.²³ Seeing this, Proteus prays to Poseidon to open a passage for him to return to Egypt *under* the seabed:

ὁ γάρ σε συλλέκτροιο Φλεγραίας πόσις
 στυγνὸς Τορώνης, ᾧ γέλως ἀπέχθεται
 καὶ δάκρυ, νῆις δ' ἐστὶ καὶ τητῶμενος
 ἀμφοῖν, ὁ Θρήκης ἔκ ποτ' εἰς ἐπακτίαν
 Τρίτωνος ἐκβολαῖσιν ἡλοκισμένην
 χέρσον περάσας, οὐχὶ ναυβάτη στόλῳ,
 ἀλλ' ἀστίβητον οἶμον, οἷα τις σιφνεύς,
 κευθμῶνος ἐν σήραγγι τετρήνας μυχοῦς,
 νέρθεν θαλάσσης ἀτραποὺς διήνυσσε,
 τέκνων ἀλύξας τὰς ξενοκτόνους πάλας
 καὶ πατρὶ πέμψας τὰς ἐπηκόους λιτὰς
 στήσαι παλμπτοῦν εἰς πάτραν, ὅθεν πλάνης
 Παλληνίαν ἐπῆλθε γηγενῶν τροφόν.

For the sullen husband whose wife is Torone of Phlegra, he who hates both laughter and tears and lives without and in ignorance of both, he who once came from Thrace to the shore furrowed by the outflow of Triton, crossing on a dry path and not on a ship, through an untrodden path like a mole, boring a secret passage in the hollowed earth, underneath the sea, made his way in avoidance of the stranger-killing wrestling of his sons, and sending prayers to his father which he gave ear to, that he be put back in his fatherland with returning feet, from which he had wandered off to Pallenia, the nurse of the earth-born. (translation adapted from Mair)

In this story, Proteus disappears under the sea with the help of Poseidon to visit the subterranean world. Despite Poseidon's lack of dominion over the Underworld,²⁴ the story is perhaps tied to Hades. Indeed, Proteus's disappearance recalls an ancient folk etymology according to which the name Hades meant “the Invisible One,” an interpretation reinforced by the god's helmet of invisibility.²⁵ Lycophron's qualification of Proteus's path as “untrodden” (ἀστίβητον οἶμον) confirms this reading because this word is associated with Hades and invisibility. Aeschylus uses ἀστυβής in the *Seven Against Thebes* 858 to describe the land of Hades as “untrodden by Apollo.” In Sophocles' *Oedipus*

at *Colonus* 126, the holy grove of the Furies is called ἀστιβὲς ἄλσος, the “untrodden grove.” In Sophocles’ *Ajax* 657, the hero hides his sword in untrodden (ἀστιβῇ) ground so that no one may see it (i.e., to make it invisible) and for Night and Hades to keep (line 660: ἀλλ’ αὐτὸ νύξ Ἄιδης τε σφωζόντων κάτω).²⁶ Ἀστιβής is a rare word that appears only five times in Greek literature before the Roman period. To explain this unusual word, Hesychius gives the three following glosses: (1) ἀστιβῇ · ἄβατον, (2) ἀστιβῆτοι οἶκοι · τὰ ἄδυτα, (3) ἀστιβους · ἀπατήτους. In all three cases, the words Hesychius uses to gloss ἀστιβής describe sacred or underground locations that must be left untrodden: ἄβατον,²⁷ ἄδυτον,²⁸ and ἀπάτητος.²⁹ Thus, Lycophron’s intentions in this passage are clear: he wants to convey the idea that Proteus is treading the path of Hades. Lycophron’s well-educated readers would recognize and understand the subtle allusions to Hades in the passage since they would probably have at least some of the previous occurrences of the word in mind, especially since most occur in tragedy, a grand tradition that Lycophron is reworking.

The chthonian context of Proteus’s descent under the seabed is reinforced by the comparison of Proteus to a mole.³⁰ The comparison is apt, since the mole is an animal that burrows underground tunnels, and thus resembles Proteus as he passes under the sea. Moreover, the mole is blind, a characteristic that emphasizes the interplay between the visible and the invisible in the story, as Proteus enters the invisible world of Hades under the sea. Proteus is compared to a blind animal because he is treading in the Underworld, where the light of day never shines.

The result of Proteus’s descent into Hades is emphasized by Lycophron, who spends the first three lines of the passage describing Proteus’s sullenness and his inability to laugh or cry.³¹ This detail would appear to be a rather innocent description of Proteus’s sadness at the behavior of his sons if such a handicap were not a well known condition for those who have visited Hades. Indeed, *Odyssey* 11.94 calls Hades ἀτερπέα χῶρον “the place without joy.” For the same reason, the pilgrims at the shrine of Trophonius at Lebadeia lost the ability to laugh as a consequence of their descent into the hero’s *adyton*—a ritual descent into Hades.³² Similarly, Pomponius Mela 3.102 describes a curious spring located on the Islands of the Blessed that has the power to make one laugh uncontrollably. The remedy is to drink from another nearby spring, which stops laughter. Both the shrine of Trophonius and the Islands of the Blessed are located outside the boundaries of mortality, namely, in the Underworld and in the afterlife. Thus, in Lycophron’s description, Proteus’s inability to laugh labels the whole adventure as a journey into Hades. In the story, the sea is located in between the surface and the Underworld, and by passing underneath the seabed, Proteus visits Hades. Such a *katabasis* is not uncommon in the realm of Poseidon, since many of his shrines and sacred groves contained entrances to Hades, as is the case at Taenarum and in the *alsos* of Poseidon in Athens, among others.³³ While Poseidon himself is not a divinity of the dead, in many locations he has dominion over the entrance to the Underworld.

The sea also mediates between the different parts of the world due to its connection with the broader hydrological network. All ground water—that is, not surface runoff—radiates from the outer Ocean inward into rivers and springs, and then flows outward into the sea.³⁴ In fact, according to Hesiod *Theogony* 337–62, the most important daughter of Oceanus is Styx, the river of the Underworld, and all the other rivers of the world are her sisters. Thus, the hydrological network connects all the parts of the world, from the invisible world of the gods and the dead beyond the Ocean, to the Underworld, to the surface of the earth.³⁵ The sea holds the middle position in this network, as it receives the water that flows from the rivers and springs of the earth and brings it back to the outer Ocean. The interconnection of this network of waters is beautifully expressed in Aeschylus’s *Prometheus Bound* 431–35:

βοᾷ δὲ πόντιος κλύδων
ξυμπίτνων, στένει βυθός,
κελαινός Ἄιδος ὑποβρέμει μυχός γᾶς,
παγαί θ' ἄγνωρύτων ποταμῶν
στένουσιν ἄλγος οἰκτρὸν.

The waves of the sea cry out in their fall, the marine depths groan, the dark cavern of Hades rumbles underneath, and the springs of pure-flowing rivers lament your pitiable pain.

In Aeschylus's play, the cries of pain of the Titan Prometheus, tied to the peaks of Caucasus on the shores of the Ocean, resonate through the entire hydrological network. By using the image of the hydrological network, Aeschylus expresses the cosmic proportions of Prometheus's punishment, since the hydrological network radiates throughout the entire universe. Furthermore, the image of the hydrological network illustrates Prometheus's intermediary situation between life and death, since waterways connect the world of the living with that of the dead and the gods. The location of Prometheus's torture, at the very edge of the world, also reinforces his intermediary position between life, death, and immortality.

The connecting function of the hydrological network is also evident in the practice of necromancy, or divination by communication with the souls of the dead. Indeed, the four main Greek *nekyomanteia*, or oracles of the dead, are located near the sea or other bodies of water.³⁶ The *nekyomanteion* of Acheron in Thesprotia is near the Acherusian marsh, that of Avernus in Campania is near the lake of the same name, the *nekyomanteion* at Taenarum is in a cave on the tip of the Mani peninsula that extends between the Messenian and Laconian gulfs, and finally the *nekyomanteion* of Heracleia Pontica is in a cave on the coast of the Black Sea. As Ogden shows, the spirits at the *nekyomanteia* of Acheron and Avernus are thought to rise directly from the water.³⁷ Similarly, in Aeschylus's *Ghost Raisers* (fr. 273a), Odysseus is instructed to raise the souls of the dead from the river Acheron. In all these cases, the sea and the hydrological network in general mediate between the world of the living and the dead, as they suggest tunnels leading to Hades.

In addition to necromancy, the Greeks imagined that waterways allowed for physical descents or ascents between the surface and Hades. For instance, the Oropians believed that the dead hero Amphiaras physically rose from the depths of Hades through a local spring after he became a god.³⁸ Diodorus Siculus writes that the spring Cyane sprang forth near Syracuse on the spot where Hades abducted Persephone through a chasm in the earth.³⁹ Similarly, the god Dionysus is ritually called out of Hades through the Lernaean Lake,⁴⁰ and was said to have come to the aid of the women of Tanagra from the sea when they were attacked by Triton.⁴¹ The sophist Lucian of Samosata, poking fun at these traditions, recounts in his *Menippus or Necyomancy* that the philosopher Menippus of Gadara visited Hades by passing under a marsh on the banks of the Euphrates, guided by the Chaldaean Mithrobarzanes, and came back to earth through the underground installations of the sanctuary of Trophonios at Lebadeia.⁴² Waterways, whether the sea, springs, or rivers, open a passage between the surface and the Underworld and therefore mediate between the living and the dead, the visible and invisible worlds.

Salt Water and Fresh Water

In the hydrological network, the salt water of the sea alternates with the fresh water of springs, rivers, and the Ocean. The fresh water of rivers and springs flows into the salt

water of the sea, which itself flows into the fresh water of the Ocean at the edge of the world. This peculiar arrangement leads to the question of the relationship between salt and fresh water. What is the significance of the intermediary position of the salt water of the sea between two bodies of fresh water?

Water, whether fresh or salty, has many ambiguous characteristics that make it appropriate to represent a permeable barrier. Indeed, water forms a moving boundary that can be crossed. Water is also translucent, but its reflective surface conceals dark depths. Water is necessary to life, yet capable of killing by drowning. Accordingly, most Greek representations of death include a passage over water, whether it is the fresh water of rivers or the salt water of the sea.⁴³ Descents into Hades, as for instance represented in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, involve crossing a marsh or river with the help of Charon.⁴⁴ Voyages to Hades or to the Islands of the Blessed involve crossing the sea and are represented as sailing or flying expeditions over the sea and the Ocean.⁴⁵ Literary metaphors that compare death to the sea or to a wave are also common. For instance, Pindar, *Nemean* 7.30–31, calls death κύμ' Αἶδα "the wave of Hades." Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 667, writes Ἄιδην πόντιον πεφευγότες "having escaped a marine Hades." Finally, Antiphilos of Byzantium in the *Greek Anthology* 7.630 compares the sea to Hades: ἦν ἶσος Αἰδὶ πόντος "the sea was like Hades."⁴⁶

Despite their shared role in marking the boundaries between life and death, fresh water and salt water differ in important ways. Fresh water is generally associated with fertility, while salt water is sterile. The sterility of salt water is expressed in the Homeric epithet of the sea ἀτρώγετος "fruitless, unharvested" (e.g., ἐπ' ἀτρυγέτον πόντον "on the barren sea," *Il.* 15.27). The image presents the sea as an unproductive field, a paradoxical image that contrasts liquid and solid, land and sea. The epithet opposes the teeming life that grows in the fields with the vast and empty surface of the sea, where the moving waters and the salt prevent any cultivation. Other similar formulas express the same idea, such as θαλάσσης ἀλμυρὸν ὕδωρ "the bitter water of the sea" (e.g., *Od.* 12.236) and παρὰ θῖν' ἄλως ἀτρυγέτοιο "on the shore of the barren sea" (e.g., *Il.* 1.316).

Since it is metaphorically devoid of life, seawater is *absolutely* pure. Seawater is considered incorruptible (ἀμίαντος) and can cleanse any human pollution,⁴⁷ in particular the miasma of death. A sacred law from Ceos (fifth century BC) prescribes the aspersion of houses polluted by a recent death with seawater.⁴⁸ At the Athenian festival of the Bouphonia, the knife found guilty of killing the sacrificial ox was thrown into the sea in order to disperse the pollution of a blood crime.⁴⁹ In the *Iliad* 1.313–16, Agamemnon commands his soldiers to reject the water used to cleanse the pollution of the plague into the sea (εἰς ἄλλα λύματα βάλλον) while they perform sacrifices "on the shores of the barren sea" (παρὰ θῖν' ἄλως ἀτρυγέτοιο). Finally, in the scapegoat ritual performed annually at Leucas, a convicted criminal was charged with the pollution of the whole city and thrown down the cliff into the sea to purify the community and avert evil.⁵⁰ Thus, the sterility of the sea promotes purity, especially in cases where pollution is of major importance, involving death, blood, or an entire community. In addition, the immensity of the sea serves to disperse pollution by losing bodies and objects forever in the depths.

Fresh water can also be considered pure—if it is not standing water and if it is free of sediment and other pollutants—and it is commonly used as a cleansing agent. However, the uses of fresh water are more general than those of salt water, ranging from house hold cleaning to ritual bathing, cleansing the blood shed during birth, preparing the bodies of the dead for burial, and spreading aspersions at the entrance of sanctuaries.⁵¹ In fact, the uses of fresh water for purification overlap in large part with those of salt water, but salt water is used to emphasize the need for absolute purification, especially in relation to death, as an overdetermination of purification by fresh water.

Euripides' *Hecabe* 609–14 exploits the contrast between salt water and fresh water.

After Polyxena's death, Hecabe requests salt water instead of the more usual fresh water to prepare her daughter's body for the funeral.⁵² The salt water bath emphasizes Polyxena's eternal sterility and her incapacity to bear children as a bride of Hades. In this passage, the salt water funeral bath replaces the fresh water nuptial bath that the girl will never receive. Although the nuptial bath has often been said to have funerary connotations because of the underground water used (or the underground location, such as *Nymphaia* or springs) and the symbolic death of brides upon their wedding, the objective of the nuptial bathing ritual is clear. The nuptial bath aims to promote the purity and fertility of the bride.⁵³ Accordingly, fresh water is always used.⁵⁴ In Polyxena's case, the salt water bath represents the eternal sterility of the dead girl and contrasts the fertility of fresh water with the sterility of seawater. Both types of water purify, but in the image crafted by Euripides, fresh water cleanses in order to prepare the way for giving new life, while salt water cleanses and prepares the way for death.

Despite its proverbial sterility, it is undeniable that the sea is full of animal life and that it was an important source of food for the ancients. Accordingly, the sea has another Homeric epithet, πόντος ἰχθυόεις "the fish-filled sea" (e.g., *Il.* 9.4). Yet while the image of the fish-filled sea evokes sustenance, the very same fish can also devour and disperse the bodies of dead sailors and prevent the administration of proper burial rites. The fear of such a death haunts Odysseus and his family as the hero roams the sea. Eumaeus, speculating on his master's fate, says to the disguised Odysseus, ἦ τόν γ' ἐν πόντῳ φάγον ἰχθύες, ὅστέα δ' αὐτοῦ κείται ἐπ' ἡπείρου ψαμάθῳ εἰλυμένα πολλῇ "or the fish devoured him in the sea, and his bones lie on the beach covered in deep sand" (*Od.* 14.135–36).⁵⁵ A Geometric krater from Pithecusae also illustrates this fear, as a capsized ship pours out its sailors and giant fish eat them in the water.⁵⁶ Similarly, a late geometric oinochoe conserved in Munich represents a shipwreck with large fish swimming and jumping among the drowning sailors (Fig. 2).⁵⁷ The sea is a source of food and sustenance, but the very same food can also bring death.

Beyond the sea, the water of the Ocean is fresh. Just like the sea, the Ocean is pure and nothing can defile it (τό μιν οὐ τι μιαίνει "nothing pollutes it," Strabo 2.3.5). However, since the waters of the Ocean are located beyond the mortal world, its waters purify the gods rather than men or objects. In Orphic Hymn 83 (Quandt), the Ocean is called θεῶν ἄγνισμα μέγιστον "the greatest agent of purification of the gods." In the Homeric Hymn to Selene 5–11 the goddess bathes in the waters of the Ocean before ascending into the sky to shine through the night. In fact, all celestial bodies except the constellation of the Bear bathe in the Ocean.⁵⁸ This bath maintains and renews the gods' divine power to shine. This mythical bath parallels the ritual bath of cult statues in the sea, such as the bath of Athena's statue at the Athenian Plynteria. As Ginouvès and Kahil explain, such baths were meant to symbolize the renewed power of the divinity.⁵⁹ In both cases, ritual and mythical baths in waters that are absolutely pure ensure the continuation of the divine order.

Unlike the waters of the sea, the waters of the Ocean are fertile. Humid Oceanic breezes speed the growth of wondrous vegetation on the Island of the Blessed and in the Garden of the Hesperides.⁶⁰ Moreover, since the Ocean flows at the boundary between the world of the living, the dead, and the gods, its waters support life beyond mortality, namely, eternal life. Water from the Ocean is a necessary ingredient for the brewing of ambrosia, the liquor that sustains the immortal life of the gods. In the *Odyssey* 12.62 and Moero fr. 1 Powell (= Ath. *Deipn.* 410e and 491b–c) doves bring ambrosia to Zeus from Oceanus.⁶¹ In Euripides' description of Zeus's nuptial chamber beyond the Ocean (*Hippolytus* 742–50), a spring of ambrosia flows by the god's bedstead. In Hyginus *Fabulae* 182 and 192, the personified Ambrosia is a daughter of Oceanus. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 7.267, Medea puts sand washed in Oceanus in the potion she mixes in

order to rejuvenate Aeson. Finally, on Tyrian coinage from the third century AD, Oceanus is represented with the ἀμβροσία πέτραι “the Ambrosian Rocks” from which ambrosia flows.⁶² The waters of Ocean sustain life and fertility beyond the limitations of mortality.



Figure 2. Late Geometric oinochoe, ca. 740–720. Munich, Antikensammlungen, 8696. Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek München. Photo: Christa Kopperman.

Thus the salt water of the sea lies between the fertility of the fresh water that sustains biological life on earth and the fresh water that sustains the super natural, eternal life of the gods beyond the Ocean. The barren water of the sea holds the same position as death, which stands in the middle between mortal life and the eternal life of the dead and the gods.⁶³ As a transitional space between these states of existence, the sea integrates the characteristics of both extremes, in particular the power both to sustain and to extinguish life.

Transcending Mortality: The Old Men of the Sea

The Old Men of the Sea, Nereus, Phorcys, and Proteus, embody the paradoxical characteristics of the sea.⁶⁴ They are old, yet immortal, indicating that they live at the boundary between mortal and immortal time. They are even thought to have seen the world since its very inception, which explains their extreme old age.⁶⁵ The Old Men of the Sea are also shape-shifters who possess the ability to transform themselves into any animal, human, or inanimate form they wish. This characteristic illustrates the disorienting changes in shape and color of the sea as well as its power to change objects by erosion and by encouraging the growth of shells, corals, and other marine life.⁶⁶ This transformative power evokes the indefinite, ever-changing nature of the sea as well as the ultimate transformation that occurs at the boundary between life, death, and immortality. Finally, the Old Men of the Sea are omniscient, truthful, and just.⁶⁷ In the *Odyssey* 4.385, Proteus is said to “know the depths of the whole sea” (θαλάσσης πάσης βένθεα οἶδε), an assertion that emphasizes the prodigious quality of his divine knowledge.

The Old Men of the Sea grudgingly exercise these prophetic abilities for men when they are compelled. Sailors who want to question them must trap them and hold on through their successive transformations to receive an answer to their questions.⁶⁸ Menelaus (*Od.* 4.333–570) catches Proteus by hiding among his flock of seals. Menelaus hangs on as Proteus transforms into a lion, a serpent, a leopard, a boar, flowing water, and finally, a tree. In the end, Proteus tires of his game and reveals how Menelaus can placate the gods in order to return to Sparta. Proteus then reveals the fate of Menelaus’s fellow warriors Ajax, Agamemnon, and Odysseus during their return from Troy. Finally, Proteus reveals that Menelaus will go to the Islands of the Blessed after his death because he is Helen’s husband.

Similarly, Heracles hangs on to Nereus’s body as the god transforms into “all manner of shapes” (παντοίας ἐναλλάσσοντα μορφάς, *Apollod.* 2.114) and is finally told the way to the island of the Hesperides, the Nymphs who guard the fruit of immortality. Alternatively, according to Stesichorus, Heracles receives the cup of Helios from Nereus, which also allows him to reach the island of the Hesperides.⁶⁹ These episodes show that the Old Men of the Sea possess knowledge that is beyond the limitations of the human condition, yet is accessible through revelation. They can direct men on the bewildering paths of the sea and, most important, can show the way beyond the boundaries of mortality. Indeed, Menelaus is informed that he will spend eternity on the Islands of the Blessed and Heracles learns the way to reach immortality. Thus, the Old Men of the Sea are communicators of divine knowledge. This function corresponds to that of the sea itself as a pathway between the mortal and immortal worlds.

The goddess Thetis can be added to the group of the Old Men of the Sea. While she is neither male nor old, she is the daughter of Nereus, one of the Old Men of the Sea.⁷⁰ Like the Old Men of the Sea, Thetis is a shape-shifter. Peleus must hang on to her through her multiple transformations in order to receive her hand in marriage (*Fig. 3*).⁷¹ Most important, Thetis is endowed with oracular powers. She reveals Achilles’ destiny,

prompting him to make his crucial choice of glory over a long life (*Il.* 9.410–16). Thus, Thetis fulfils the same role as the Old Men of the Sea. She bridges the gap between mortals and immortals by revealing divine knowledge, especially concerning death and the afterlife. Her reluctance to associate with mortals, as seen in her defiance of Peleus, parallels the typical reluctance of the Old Men of the Sea and illustrates the difficulty faced by mortals in accessing divine knowledge.



Figure 3. Attic red-figure kylix from Vulci. Berlin, Antikensammlung F2279. Staatliche Museen Berlin. Photo: Art Resource, NY.

The Titan Oceanus, while he is never called the Old Man of the Sea, shares many characteristics with these figures. Oceanus was born from the first cosmic entities, Gaia and Uranus, and participated in the process of differentiation of the universe into various parts and creatures. The commentator Heraclitus, writing about the Homeric poems in the first century AD, reports a tradition that Oceanus contains the essence of all things, and that he therefore gave rise to Proteus, a god who can take any shape, knows everything, and, significantly, is an Old Man of the Sea.⁷² Like Proteus and other Old Men of the Sea, Oceanus is wise and gives advice in times of need, as in Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*.⁷³ Oceanus's benevolence in Aeschylus's play corresponds with the gentleness ascribed to Nereus by Hesiod (ἤπιος "kind," *Theog.* 235). As Rudhardt notes, Oceanus generally represents a force for good in the world, both in his personified form as an old man and as the encircling river Ocean, whose water is fertile and pure.⁷⁴



Figure 4. Attic black-figure dinos, ca. 580 BC. London, British Museum 1971.11-1.1. Photo: © The Trustees of the British Museum.

The double nature of Oceanus as a kind of “Old Man of the Sea” and as a river transpires in iconography, where painters represent him either as an old man or as a hybrid creature endowed with a snake tail (Fig. 4).⁷⁵ On black-and red-figure pottery, Oceanus is represented as an old man, sometimes with a bull’s head or horns, as is common for river gods, or with crab claws on his head and shells in his beard.⁷⁶ Sometimes, Oceanus also appears as an old man with a snake-like lower body.⁷⁷ This depiction became more and more popular in the Hellenistic period, until it commonly adorned mosaics, fountains, and even the coinage of certain cities in the Roman period.⁷⁸ In Classical art, Oceanus is also often represented as a fully anthropomorphic old man accompanied by hippalektryones and other such mythical marine creatures. In these cases, Oceanus is hardly distinguishable from other marine divinities and Old Men of the Sea such as Triton, Poseidon, Acheloos, Nereus, and Proteus.⁷⁹

Like Oceanus and Thetis, the Graeae are not Old Men of the Sea *sensu stricto*, but they share many of the characteristics of this group of deities. The Graeae are the daughters of Phorcyas and Ceto and are therefore directly related with the Old Man of the Sea through genealogy.⁸⁰ Like other Old Men of the Sea, the Graeae stand at the boundary between mortal and immortal time, since they are eternally old. Their name means “the gray ones.” They are born old, with gray hair, and share only one tooth and one eye between the three of them.⁸¹ Their appearance illustrates all the miseries of old age, such as ugliness, missing teeth, and especially dim vision. The Graeae’s near blindness emphasizes their ability to see beyond the visible world, a common characteristic of seers and inspired poets such as Tiresias and Homer, who are completely blind.⁸² Indeed, the Graeae live at the frontier between the visible and invisible world. They are the guardians of the approach to the Ocean, and in particular, to the Gorgons’ abode.⁸³ This location is at the very edge of the Night (ἔσχατινὴ πρὸς Νυκτός) where the personifications of the evening, the Hesperides, also live. Thus the Graeae are the gatekeepers of what lies in the darkness beyond the evening of life, namely death.⁸⁴ They live in a dim and gray area on the threshold of death.

Accordingly, the Graeae's revelation to the hero Perseus concerns what lies beyond death. After Perseus has stolen their eye to force them to cooperate with him, the Graeae reveal the location of the Stygian Nymphs' cave.⁸⁵ These Nymphs live by the infernal river Styx, daughter of Ocean. They hold the equipment Perseus needs to embark on his quest for the Gorgon's head, namely Hermes' winged sandals, the *kibisis* (the magical sack to hold the Gorgon's head), the sword or sickle to cut her throat, and finally Hades' helmet of invisibility.⁸⁶ Thus, the Graeae's revelation allows Perseus to reach the land beyond death, namely the river Styx and the Gorgon. Throughout the story, the visual imagery emphasizes the hero's passage between the visible and invisible worlds. Perseus uses the Graeae's blindness against them by stealing their eye and compelling them to reveal their knowledge. Then Perseus triumphs over Medusa's deadly glance by donning Hades' helmet of invisibility or by using his shield as a mirror. Finally, Perseus triumphs over Polydectes and the Seriphians upon his return by showing them Medusa's head and turning them to stone. In this way, the Graeae direct Perseus to the invisible world and give him knowledge of what lies beyond death, an advantage that allows him to vanquish his enemies and establish himself.

Like the Graeae, the marine god Glaucus stands at the boundary between life and death. His name means approximately the same as the name of the Graeae, since "Glaucus" means "the gray one."⁸⁷ The name refers to the indefinite color of the sea and represents Glaucus's indefinite status between mortality and immortality. Indeed, Glaucus is not born immortal. He was originally a mortal fisherman from the town of Anthedon in Boeotia. One day, Glaucus notices that a certain herb revives the dead fish in his catch.⁸⁸ Glaucus eats the herb and, affected by a sudden madness, throws himself into the sea. He is then metamorphosed into an immortal merman endowed with prophetic powers. He continues to grow old indefinitely, but never dies. Aeschylus and Ovid affirm that the gods cleanse Glaucus's mortality in the running water of numerous rivers.⁸⁹ In this way, Glaucus becomes an Old Man of the Sea. He was even worshipped under this name in ancient Spain.⁹⁰ Glaucus's passage between mortality and immortality is illustrated by his leap into the sea and the cleansing of his mortality in rivers. The alternation between salt water and fresh water in the myth emphasizes the alternation between life and death in the story. Glaucus dies to his mortal self in the sea, but finds a renewed, purified eternal life in fresh water, and then settles on the frontier between life and death. This ambiguous status is illustrated by Glaucus's hybrid merman shape, a human upper body with a fish tail. Aeschylus, *Glaucus of the Sea* fr. 26 (Radt), calls him ἀνθρωποειδὲς θηρίον "a human-looking beast." Indeed, Glaucus is neither fully human or animal, nor fully mortal or immortal, since his very nature changes in the course of his life.

Glaucus's prophetic abilities give him insight into the invisible world. Glaucus prophesies for sailors,⁹¹ and appears in the *Argonautica* 1.1310–29, where he reveals that Heracles is not destined to accompany the Argonauts to Colchis, but rather will become immortal after accomplishing his labors.⁹² Thus, like other Old Men of the Sea, Glaucus knows what lies beyond the visible world and the boundaries of death. Perhaps for this reason, Plato uses the myth of Glaucus in the *Republic* 611d to represent the condition of the soul when it is subjected to the world of senses through the body. According to Plato, the soul inside the body is like Glaucus's body in the sea, which becomes unrecognizable due to the slow accretion of shells and barnacles and the breakage and addition of entire body parts. In this way, Plato declares that the nature of the soul is different from that of the body. The soul is attached to the pursuit of eternal and immortal objects (*Resp.* 611e), while the body is attached to the pursuit of temporal objects. Thus, for Plato, Glaucus's experience contrasts the visible and the invisible worlds, or the mortal with the immortal, since Glaucus crosses the boundary of mortality.⁹³ Glaucus's knowledge of what lies

beyond the visible world while trapped in an intermediary physical state gives Plato an appropriate image to represent the condition of the invisible, eternal soul ensconced in a mortal body.

The Ocean

In the story of Glaucus, a vertical leap into the sea operates the passage between the visible and invisible worlds. A similar gateway to the invisible world exists in the farthest reaches of the sea, on the line of the horizon, where the river Ocean flows.⁹⁴ According to the *Theogony* 736–39, this location is the meeting point of earth, sky, and sea:

ἐνθα δὲ γῆς δνοφερῆς καὶ Ταρτάρου ἠερόεντος
πόντου τ' ἀτρυγέτοιο καὶ οὐρανοῦ ἄστερόεντος
ἐξείης πάντων πηγαὶ καὶ πείρατ' ἕασιν,
ἀργαλέ' εὐρώεντα, τά τε στυγέουσι θεοὶ περ·

And there, one after the other, are the sources and ends of all, of the black earth, misty Tartarus, the barren sea, and the starry sky, terrible and dank, which even the gods abhor.

In the passage, one of the important differences between the parts of the world that converge on the line of the horizon is the intensity of the light that shines on them. Tartarus, like Hades and the subterranean world in general, is misty and dark. The sky is illuminated by the stars (ἄστερόεντος), and a perpetual light shines on Olympus (*Od.* 6.45).⁹⁵ The sea is therefore the midpoint between light and darkness. For this reason, the far reaches of the sea, on the line of the horizon, are characterized by a dim half-light and creatures of the twilight. The blind Graeae inhabit the region, as do the Hesperides, the nymphs of the sunset who guard the fruit of immortality.⁹⁶ The eternal twilight in which the Graeae and Hesperides live represents the intermediary space between two extremes, namely the darkness of death and the bright light of eternal life.

The scarce light available in the most remote regions of the sea is further dampened by a dark mist.⁹⁷ The sea is misty (ἠεροειδέα πόντον, *Il.* 23.744),⁹⁸ as well as the western sky (ζόφον ἠερόεντα “the misty darkness,” e.g., *Il.* 12.240).⁹⁹ The mist indicates the approach of death, an invisible reality that must not be seen. Indeed, Hades is also said to be misty,¹⁰⁰ as well as Tartarus,¹⁰¹ the Night,¹⁰² and the cave of the deadly Scylla.¹⁰³ Similarly, a cloud of mist covers the eyes of those who are about to die,¹⁰⁴ and ghosts are said to be cloaked in mist.¹⁰⁵ Mist is an opaque mix of air and water and represents the meeting point of sky and sea, a metaphor for the passage to the invisible world that happens upon death.¹⁰⁶ Mist thus forms an intangible and blurry barrier between the material and immaterial worlds. For this reason, mist also often covers invisible divine realities taking place on the mortal plane, such as the actions of the gods.¹⁰⁷

Beyond the barrier of the mist, on the shores of the Ocean, are found regions that are always dark or always sunny. This belief reflects Greek knowledge of the light variations at extreme latitudes, but it also reveals the way they understood the organization of the cosmos. The stark light and darkness that characterize the edges of the world represent the extremes of eternal life and death. The human realm stands in the middle and sees a gradation between light and darkness throughout each day.¹⁰⁸

Light and darkness alternate in the region of the Ocean because it is the landing and launching place of celestial bodies. The sun, the moon, the dawn, and the stars begin and end their daily course in the Ocean.¹⁰⁹ Because the different celestial bodies are antithetical to one another, they are separated by an opaque cloud of mist, as seen on a

Classical lekythos representing the course of the sun. On the vase, Helios rises in his chariot between the Night and the Dawn, whose bodies are depicted as swirls of mist (Fig. 5).¹¹⁰ On the other side of the vase, the mist condenses into a thick line that delimits a mound over which Heracles roasts sacrificial meat and under which a dog lurks. According to Ferrari and Ridgway, the dog is Cerberus, guarding the entrance to Hades from which Heracles is about to drag him.¹¹¹ The vase thus represents the place in the Ocean where earth, sky, and sea meet, since Helios, the Dawn, and the Night are rising from the Ocean and Heracles stands over the entrance to the Underworld. The representation finds an important parallel in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 411–13, in which Helios is said to herd his sheep at Cape Taenarum, a well-known entrance to the Underworld located on the tip of the Mani peninsula between the Messenian and Laconian gulfs. In the hymn as on the vase, the light of Helios is placed in direct juxtaposition with the darkness of Hades. A thick mist forms a barrier between the light of the sun and the darkness that prevails in the Night and in the Underworld.¹¹²



Figure 5. Attic black-figure lekythos, ca. 500 BC. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 41.162.29.

The alternation between light and dark—or visible and invisible—in the farthest reaches of the sea evokes an additional alternation, namely between materiality and immateriality. The barrier of the mist covers areas inhabited by the souls of the dead and the gods, both of which are intangible. For this reason, living mortals are strictly forbidden to cross into the Ocean beyond the Pillars of Heracles. Euripides *Hippolytus* 742–50 calls the Ocean, near the shore of the Island of the Hesperides, σερμὸν τέρμονα οὐρανοῦ “the holy boundary of the sky.” The image makes it clear that the horizon marks the divide between the tangible world and the immaterial sky. Euripides uses the common metaphor of the sea as a road to indicate that the gods forbid any travel in the area (οὐκέθ’ ὁδὸν νέμει), because this is the home of the gods and the location of Zeus’s nuptial chamber.¹¹³ In this conception, the Ocean is an impassable boundary for mortals because it encircles divine realities that must not be seen by mortals, namely, the residences of the Olympian gods. Pindar *Olympian* 3.43–45 expresses a similar sentiment when he writes that Theron’s glory has reached the ultimate limit of the mortal world, the Pillars of Heracles (the Strait of Gibraltar).¹¹⁴ Any attempt to go further, according to Pindar, is hubristic: τὸ πρόσω δ’ ἔστι σοφοῖς ἄβατον κάσσοις. οὐ νιν διώξω: κεινὸς εἶην “It is impossible for both the wise and the unwise to go any further. I will not pursue it: I would be a fool to do so.”¹¹⁵ According to both Pindar and Euripides, navigating past the line of the horizon is to encroach upon divine territory, and therefore is inappropriate for living mortals.¹¹⁶

However, once dead, mortals *must* cross the boundary between the tangible and intangible worlds. The round shape of the Ocean provides a stark reminder of this necessity, as it encircles the world and leaves no chance for escape. Yet, the immaterial barrier of the Ocean cannot be crossed by ordinary means. The dead pass over the Ocean under forms that evoke the intangible nature of the soul, such as wind, birds, or other winged creatures.¹¹⁷ In the *Odyssey* 20.61–66, Penelope expresses her desire to die by being carried over the “misty ways” (ἡερόεντα κέλευθα) by a gust of wind. Later, the souls of Penelope’s dead suitors follow Hermes over the Ocean under a form that recalls bats (*Od.* 24.1–11). Similarly, in Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King* 175–79, the chorus sings of the flight of the souls of the dead to the western Ocean: ἄλλον δ’ ἂν ἄλλῳ προσίδοις ἅπερ εὐπτερον ὄρνιν κρείσσον ἀμαμακέτου πυρὸς ὄρμενον ἀκτὰν πρὸς ἐσπέρου θεοῦ “You can see life after life taking flight like a winged bird, more powerful than irresistible fire, toward the shore of the western god.” In this passage, the souls of the dead are given the impetus of birds and fire. The two images evoke immateriality and a swift, irresistible motion, in order to illustrate the rapid and inescapable experience of death. Similar flights over the Ocean are illustrated on a number of ancient vessels, which show the dead being carried over the waves by a winged divinity such as Athena, Eos, or a Harpy.¹¹⁸ On these vases, as in literary accounts, the passage to death over the Ocean is a journey between the tangible and the intangible worlds, a process in which humans lose their corporeality.

Crossing the Ocean

The few living mortals who manage to cross into the stream of Ocean must enlist divine help. As Pindar observes in *Pythian* 10.27–30, it is impossible to pass over the Ocean by physical means such as walking or sailing. With this warning, Pindar makes it clear that mortal means are powerless to accomplish such a journey. Yet Pindar points out that Perseus, the son of Zeus, benefits from the help of Athena in accomplishing his exploit. In other iterations of the myth, Hermes lends Perseus his winged sandals, which allow crossing between the worlds of the living, the dead, and the gods.¹¹⁹ In this way, Perseus

is made intangible, as it were, to cross over the Ocean. In fact, in the *Shield* 222, Perseus's flight over the Ocean is compared to the swift flight of a thought (ὃ δ' ὥς τε νόημ' ἐποτᾶτο), an image that emphasizes the incorporeal quality of Perseus's journey.

Similarly, in the earliest versions of the Argonautic myth, the heroes cross over the Ocean.¹²⁰ To accomplish this exploit, they use the divine ship Argo, which was built on the instructions of Athena.¹²¹ One of the main obstacles facing the Argonauts is the Symplegades, the Clashing Rocks, which stand at the entrance of the Black Sea and constantly crash into one another, crushing any ship that attempts to pass through.¹²² To overcome this difficulty, the Argonauts are told to let a dove fly through the Clashing Rocks. If the bird survives, the heroes must follow it through the pass.¹²³ The myth thus compares the Argo and its sailors to a bird and evokes the immaterial flight of a soul through the door of the Underworld.¹²⁴ Indeed, doves are frequently associated with the dead, especially on girls' and women's funerary monuments.¹²⁵ Doves also often represent intangible realities in Greek poetry and iconography, such as the flight of gods,¹²⁶ souls,¹²⁷ oracular responses,¹²⁸ and love.¹²⁹ In this way, the Argonauts pass through the Symplegades and arrive in the Black Sea, which represents the territory of the dead and the gods. Indeed, the Black Sea contains an island inhabited by ghosts named Leuke, "the White Island."¹³⁰ Colchis itself, the ultimate destination of the Argonauts, is ruled by Aeetes, who is the son of Helios. The Argonauts thus sail into the intangible world of the dead and the gods to attain the country of the sun, at the boundary between the divine light and the darkness of death (see [Chapter 2](#)).

Like the Argonauts, Heracles sails to the meeting point of light and darkness. His last labors, which eventually earn him immortality, take him into the half-light of the western Ocean.¹³¹ One of the first episodes of Heracles' journey to the Ocean is his meeting with Atlas, who holds the vault of the sky at the entrance to the Ocean. As explained by Hesiod in the *Theogony* 746–50, Atlas stands precisely at the meeting point of Night and Day:

τῶν πρόσθ' Ἰαπετοῖο πάϊς ἔχει οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν
ἔστως κεφαλῇ τε καὶ ἀκαμάτησι χέρεσσιν
ἄστεμφώς, ὅθι Νύξ τε καὶ Ἡμέρη ἄσσον ἰούσαι
ἀλλήλας προσέειπον ἀμειβόμεναι μέγαν οὐδὸν
χάλκεον.

In front of them, the son of Japetus supports the broad sky, standing, with his head and his indefatigable arms, unshakably, where Night and Day come close and speak to one another when they switch places on either side of the great bronze threshold.

Atlas guards the boundary of Night and Day, facing the place where the earth, the sky, and the sea meet in the abyss of Tartarus (*Theog.* 736–39). Atlas also faces the garden of the Hesperides (*Theog.* 517–19). Hesiod notes that in this area, the light of the Sun alternates with the Night, which is covered in a dark cloud of mist (Νύξ ὀλοή, νεφέλη κεκαλυμμένη ἡεροειδῆι "the deadly Night, wrapped in a misty cloud," *Theog.* 757). Thus, when he meets Atlas, Heracles stands in a dim, intermediary space at the crossroads of the world. Heracles is therefore the hero who passes beyond the antithetical forces that determine the world: night and day, good and evil (cf. the famous Choice of Heracles),¹³² mortality and immortality. In fact, on a fifth-century lekythos, Heracles receives the golden apples from Atlas.¹³³ In this iteration of the myth, crossing the boundary of the mortal world beyond the pillars that he himself placed at the mouth of the Mediterranean is the token of Heracles' immortality.¹³⁴

In other versions of the myth, Heracles receives the fruit of immortality from the

Hesperides, the nymphs of the sunset. The Hesperides are the daughters of Atlas and of the Night.¹³⁵ According to Pherecydes *FGrH* 3F17, Atlas himself obtains the apples from the Hesperides and gives them to Heracles. The location of the wondrous garden where the apples grow varies, but it is always in the Ocean, on the edges of the known world in places where, significantly, the level of light differs dramatically from that which prevails in the *oecumene*, the inhabited world. Early poets place the garden on an island in the extreme west, at the crossroads of Night and Day.¹³⁶ In later sources, the garden is said to be in Libya, a land of intense sunshine (Diod. Sic. 4.26.2) or in the Atlantic (Plin. *HN* 6.201). Finally, Apollodorus 2.113 places the garden in the land of the Hyperboreans, which is on “the hinges of the world” (*cardines mundi*) and therefore gets six full months of light followed by six full months of continuous night.¹³⁷ In general, the garden of the Hesperides is considered to be the westernmost point in the world. Ptolemy *Geography* 4.6.34 even assigns the island a longitude of zero degrees in his reckoning of the world. Thus, in this version of the myth too, Heracles acquires immortality in a location characterized by special light. The sunset suggested in the name of the Hesperides evokes the passage to death, but Heracles actually vanquishes death with his visit. A Classical vase shows Heracles receiving the golden apples from the Hesperides in the presence of Hermes, the messenger god who accompanies men across the boundary between life and death.¹³⁸ In this representation, Heracles has passed beyond mortality with the help of Hermes and triumphed over death by obtaining the golden apples from a garden that is located at the frontier of life, death, and immortality.¹³⁹ As Diodorus Siculus 4.26.4 notes, the golden apples of the Hesperides are the guarantee of Heracles’ immortality.

Yet a little earlier in his narration, Diodorus claims that the cattle of Geryon were the token of Heracles’ immortality (Diod. Sic. 4.23.2). As noted by Jourdain-Annequin, Heracles’ struggle against Geryon is a doublet of the Hesperides adventure and can also be read as a foray into the afterlife.¹⁴⁰ These two labors of Heracles share a westward itinerary as well as the same side quests, such as the struggle against Busiris and Antaeus. Both episodes take place on sunset islands. The name of Erytheia, the island of Geryon, means “the red island,” probably as a reference to the sunset in the West. Erytheia is also the name of one of the Hesperides.¹⁴¹ The twilight that reigns on Erytheia recalls the twilight of the island of the Hesperides and suggests that it is an intermediary location between life and death. In fact, Strabo writes that according to Eratosthenes, Erytheia was the island of the Blessed.¹⁴² The islands of both the Hesperides and Erytheia are located on the shores of the Ocean, beyond the edge of the mortal world.¹⁴³ Both episodes also involve a token of immortality, either the golden apples or the cattle of Geryon. Thus, in the Geryon adventure too, Heracles sails to a dimly lit location beyond the boundary of the mortal world in order to gain a token of immortality. The monsters that Heracles defeats there, the three-bodied Geryon and his triple-bodied dog Orthrus, the brother of Cerberus, also suggest a quest in an infernal location, beyond the boundaries of death.¹⁴⁴



Figure 6. Attic red-figure kylix, ca. 480 BC, from Vulci. Museo Gregoriano Etrusco, no. 16563 (formerly 545). Vatican Museums, Vatican State. Photo: Alinari / Art Resource, NY.

Significantly, Heracles sails across the western Ocean in the cup of Helios (Fig. 6).¹⁴⁵ This magical cup carries Helios around the Ocean every evening from his setting place in the West to the East, so that he may rise again in the morning. By using the cup of Helios, Heracles travels in the wake of the sun itself in his journey beyond the meeting point of light and dark. Heracles obtains this magical vessel either from Nereus (Stesich. fr. 184a) or from Helios himself. In Pherecydes *FGrH* F18a, Heracles even threatens Helios or the river Ocean to get the cup. Several vase paintings are thought to represent the scene in which Heracles strides toward Helios in a menacing manner.¹⁴⁶ Heracles' aggressive takeover of Helios's cup suggests that the hero is accomplishing a forbidden journey. His adversaries, either the Sun or the Ocean, clarify the nature of the transgression: it is a foray beyond the geographical and cosmological boundaries of the world. The cup of the Sun is therefore much more than a sailing implement for Heracles. Like the sandals Hermes lends to Perseus, the cup is a magical object that allows crossing between worlds and marks the hero as a special individual with respect to the gods.



Figure 7. Attic red-figure pelike, ca. 480–470 BC. Paris, Louvre G234. Photo: © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.

In the course of his navigation on the Ocean, Heracles encounters Geras, the personification of old age, who is the son of the Night (*Theog.* 225). No literary account of the struggle survives, but the figurative sources show Geras as a small, wrinkled, and emaciated figure violently defeated by Heracles with his club (Fig. 7).¹⁴⁷ By vanquishing old age, Heracles defeats the darkness that awaits mortals at the end of life, and which is preceded by its kindred, old age. In this way, the darkness that reigns in the western

Ocean is not only a cosmological marker indicating the boundaries of the human experience but also a marker of time. The Night generates Old Age, the countdown that ultimately spells the death of mortals. By crossing beyond the Night and defeating her son Geras, Heracles passes beyond the limited time allotted to mortals to attain eternity.

Indeed, as a result of his adventures on the Ocean, Heracles acquires immortality and marries Hebe, the daughter of Zeus and Hera and the personification of youth.¹⁴⁸ Heracles will thus never suffer from old age, but rather, he will enjoy the eternal youth and eternal life of the gods. Pindar *Isthmian* 4.55–60 describes Heracles’ deification in the following terms:

υἱὸς Ἀλκμήνας· ὃς Οὐλυμπόνδ’ ἔβα, γαίᾱς τε πάσας
καὶ βαθύκρημον πολιᾶς ἄλδος ἐξευρών θέναρ,
ναυτιλίασιν τε πορθμὸν ἡμερώσας.
νῦν δὲ παρ’ Αἰγίοχῳ κάλλιστον ὄλβον
ἁμφέπων ναίει, τετίμαται τε πρὸς ἀθανάτων φίλος, Ἥβαν τ’ ὀπυίει,
χρυσέων οἰκῶν ἄναξ καὶ γαμβρὸς Ἥρας.

Alcmena’s son; he went to Olympus, after he had explored all lands and the deep pit of the gray sea, and had tamed the straits for sailors. Now he lives in utmost happiness with Zeus who bears the aegis. He is honored as a friend by the immortals and is the husband of Hebe; he is the chief of a golden house, and Hera’s son-in-law.

In this passage, Pindar emphasizes Heracles’ travels across the world: after seeing the entire earth and the depths of the sea, Heracles crosses the boundary of mortality and goes to Olympus to join the company of the gods. The image crafted by Pindar unites earth, sky, and sea, and emphasizes the idea that Heracles travels to the very crossroads of the universe. Moreover, Heracles’ “taming of the straits” foregrounds his greatest achievement, namely his crossing over the ford of the Ocean to attain immortality.

Heracles’ fording of the Ocean allows his entrance into the invisible world. Hesiod in *Theogony* 287–94 uses the phrase διαβάς πόρον Ὠκεανοῖο “crossing the path of Ocean” in the narration of Heracles’ return from the western Ocean after capturing the cattle of Geryon. The word πόρον “path, ford” recalls the common metaphor of the sea as a pathway. This pathway can lead not only to distant lands, but also to those outside of the mortal world altogether. Perhaps for this reason, the scholiast of the *Theogony* glosses πόρον Ὠκεάνιο as τὸν ἄξονα, ἥτοι τὸν ὀρίζοντα “the axle, or the horizon.” The image of the horizon recalls Euripides’ formulation when he called the Ocean σεμνὸν τέρμονα οὐρανοῦ “the holy boundary of the sky.” The scholiast’s comparison of the Ocean to an axle also suggests that the encircling river is the hinge of the world, the point upon which other moving parts turn in a circular motion.¹⁴⁹ The “axle” comparison brings to mind the image of ships disappearing under the line of the horizon as they sail away on the rounded surface of the sea and gradually reappear upon their return. The Ocean is the point on which the round world revolves and around which objects appear and disappear as they pass from the visible part of the world into the invisible. In the context of Heracles’ journey, the Ocean articulates the movements of the mortal and immortal parts of the world, as the hero transcends mortality by following the path of Ocean.

A further gloss on the same passage, this one by Hesychius, clarifies the nature of Heracles’ journey across the Ocean. Hesychius glosses the phrase πόρον Ὠκεάνιο “the path of Ocean” (*Theog.* 292) as τὸν ἀέρα, εἰς ὃν αἱ ψυχαὶ τῶν τελευτώντων ἀποχωροῦσιν “the air in which the souls of the dead go away.” The Ocean is thus not only the axle, the horizon, or the point where sky and sea meet, but also the place where life and death converge. By calling the Ocean “air” (ἀέρα) and emphasizing the transition

between elements, Hesychius illustrates the Ocean's function as the meeting point of the material and the immaterial. The souls of the dead fly or, more precisely, "depart" (ἀποχωροῦσιν) by literally vanishing into thin air, leaving their bodies behind. This is precisely what happens to Heracles, who sails across the Ocean to find immortality and eventually leaves the earth to dwell in the sky among the Olympians. In fact, Heracles leaves the earth by burning on a pyre, an image that vividly illustrates his passage from the material to the immaterial world.¹⁵⁰

Like Heracles, Odysseus travels on the Ocean, but while Heracles leaves the mortal world as a result of his journey over the Ocean, Odysseus accomplishes the journey in the opposite direction. Odysseus's navigation takes him to the very edge of death and then back again to the human realm.

At the start of the *Odyssey*, Telemachus complains that Odysseus is invisible and has not been heard from: οἷχετ' ἄϊστος ἄνυστος, "he left and became invisible and unheard from" (*Od.* 1.242). Similarly, Alcinous assures Odysseus that he believes his tales, although they come out of "what no man can even see" (ὅθεν κέ τις οὐδὲ ἴδοιτο, *Od.* 11.366). Indeed, Odysseus visits improbable and incredibly distant lands such as those of the Cicones, the lotus-eaters, and the Cyclops. When he is blown away by the bag of the Winds, Odysseus even reaches the land of the Laestrygonians, where the paths of the Night and the Day cross one another (*Od.* 10.86). His journey therefore has cosmic proportions, as Odysseus visits all parts of the universe, whether mortal, immortal, or the land of the dead.¹⁵¹

In order to leave this state of invisibility and return to Ithaca, Odysseus must go to Hades to learn his way home from the dead Tiresias. This voyage takes Odysseus into the darkness of the western Ocean (*Od.* 11.11–13).

τῆς δὲ πανημερίης τέταθ' ἰστία ποντοπορούσης:
δύσετό τ' ἥελιος σκιδώντό τε πᾶσαι ἀγνυαί.
ἦ δ' ἐς πείραθ' ἵκανε βαθυρρόδου Ὠκεανοῖο.

Throughout the day the ship's sails were taut as she crossed the sea; then the sun set and all the roads became dark, and the ship arrived within the confines of the deep-flowing Ocean.

Odysseus's westward navigation over the sea (ποντοπορούσης) takes him on the marine roads (ἀγνυαί) to the darkness of the sunset, at the entrance of the realm of the dead. Like Perseus, Odysseus must approach the very edge of the Night to acquire the knowledge that allows him to cross between the visible and invisible worlds and finally return to the land of the living.

The *Odyssey* signals Odysseus's progressive return from the invisible world by using the image of mist. Odysseus must cross the dark veils of mist that separate the world of the living from that of the dead in order to return to Ithaca. He starts in Hades, near the misty land of the Cimmerians, which is always dark (*Od.* 11.14–19). In Hades itself, Odysseus meets his comrade Elpenor and his mother Anticleia, both of whom are covered with the misty darkness of death (ζόφον ἡρόεντα, *Od.* 11.57 and 155–56). Anticleia warns Odysseus that he has entered the invisible realm, which is distressing to see for living mortals: χαλεπὸν δὲ τάδε ζωοῖσιν ὀρᾶσθαι (*Od.* 11.155–56). After leaving Hades, Odysseus passes the Sirens and struggles through the straits of Scylla and Charybdis. The peak on which Scylla lives is covered by a dark cloud (νεφέλη κυανή, *Od.* 12.74–75), and her cave is misty (σπέος ἡεροειδές, *Od.* 12.77). In all these locations, the mist symbolizes the darkness of death, a reality hidden from the living by opaque clouds.

In the course of their navigation, Odysseus and his comrades arrive on the island of

Helios, where Zeus hides land and sea with storm clouds (σὺν δὲ νεφέεσσι κάλυψε γαῖαν ὁμοῦ καὶ πόντον, *Od.* 12.314–15) and leaves them stranded in a cave. After a long sojourn there, Odysseus's comrades no longer heed Tiresias's warning and slaughter the forbidden cattle of Helios. The angry sun god then threatens Zeus to go shine for the dead in Hades (*Od.* 12.382–83). Facing this inconceivable reversal of the world order, Zeus kills Odysseus's companions.¹⁵² In this episode too, the alternation between light and dark signals that Odysseus and his companions are on the fringes of the world. The bright island of Helios and his cattle belong to the immortal world, while the misty storm that strands the navigators spells their death.

Odysseus alone survives the storm and lands on Calypso's island, where the Nymph hides him (Calypso's name signifies "she who hides") for seven years, preventing his return home. In this episode, the companions' unlawful encroachment upon the bright land and cattle of Helios results in an imprisonment in the land of invisibility for Odysseus. During that period, Odysseus is even offered immortality by Calypso (*Od.* 5.203–13), a transformation that, had he accepted, would have definitively removed Odysseus from the world of living mortals.

Finally, Zeus grants Odysseus's return to Ithaca. After barely escaping death when his raft is destroyed by Poseidon, Odysseus spots the island of Scheria. The island appears (ἐφάνη) out of the misty sea (ἐν ἡεροειδέϊ πόντῳ, *Od.* 5.279–81), a vision that signals the end of Odysseus's blind wanderings in the foggy, indeterminate space of the sea. After Odysseus tells his story, the Phaeacians offer to take him home. As they do so, their boat crosses the misty sea (ἀνιοῦσαν ἐν ἡεροειδέϊ πόντῳ, *Od.* 13.150), while Odysseus sleeps the sleep of death (ὕπνος ... θανάτῳ ἄγχιστα ἐοικῶς "sleep, most like to death," *Od.* 13.79–80). Thus, as Odysseus crosses the misty sea to return home to the land of the living, he crosses the barrier of darkness that represents death.¹⁵³

Once back on Ithaca, Odysseus is once again under the light of the sun. When he questions Athena, who has taken the form of a young man, about what land he has come to, Odysseus receives the following answer:

ἴσασι δέ μιν μάλα πολλοί,
ἤμῃν ὅσοι ναῖουσι πρὸς ἥῳ τ' ἡέλιόν τε,
ἢ δ' ὅσοι μετόπισθε ποτὶ ζόφον ἡερόντα. (*Od.* 13.239–41)

Many know it [this land], whether those who live on the side of the dawn and the sun or those who live behind on the side of the misty darkness.

With this answer, Athena locates Ithaca in the middle of the solar course, in full light between the brightness of the East and the darkness of the West. In fact, one of Ithaca's epithets is εὐδείελον "clear-seen" (*Od.* 2.167, 9.21, 13.325, etc.).

Yet, so long as he is not the master of his own house again, Odysseus must remain invisible. At first, Athena shades his eyes with a mist, which prevents him from recognizing Ithaca (*Od.* 13.188). Athena then removes the mist (*Od.* 13.352), but she makes Odysseus unrecognizable (ἄγνωτον, *Od.* 13.397) so that he can enter the palace disguised as a beggar.¹⁵⁴ Athena also suggests that Odysseus hide his trea sure in the misty cave of the Nymphs (ἄντρον ἡεροειδέξ, *Od.* 13.103–12). In this way, Odysseus's identity, wealth, and status remain invisible until he can take command of Ithaca. In fact, the *Odyssey* specifies that the cave of the Nymphs has two doors, one for humans and one for the gods. The mist that lies in the middle, where the trea sure is hidden, suggests that Odysseus's identity (i.e., his wealth) remains in the invisible space between the world of mortals and immortals, much in the way Odysseus is hidden while on Calypso's island.

In the following episodes, Odysseus progressively reveals himself to his servants, his family members, and finally Penelope. Odysseus's return spells the death of the suitors,

whose demise is signaled by portents of darkness and mist:

ἄ δειλοί, τί κακὸν τόδε πάσχετε; νυκτὶ μὲν ὑμέων
εἰλύεται κεφαλαί τε πρόσωπά τε νέρθε τε γοῦνα,
οἰμωγὴ δὲ δέδηκε, δεδάκρυνται δὲ παρειαί,
αἵματι δ' ἐρράδαται τοῖχοι καλαί τε μεσόδομαι.
εἰδῶλων δὲ πλέον πρόθυρον, πλείη δὲ καὶ αὐλή,
ιέμενων Ἑρεβόσδε ὑπὸ ζόφον· ἥελιος δὲ
οὐρανοῦ ἐξαπόλωκε, κακὴ δ' ἐπιδέδρομεν ἀχλύς. (*Od.* 20.351–57)

Wretched men, what evil are you suffering? Your heads, your faces, and your knees below are covered with night, a lament resounds, your cheeks flow with tears, the walls and the beautiful rafters are sprinkled with blood; the porch and the courtyard are full of ghosts which hasten to the darkness of Erebus; the sun has been chased out of the sky and an evil mist hovers.

In his vision, Theoclymenus foresees the death that is about to take the suitors in the form of a mist that has descended upon the house. And indeed, soon after, in the second *Nekyia*, Hermes guides the dead suitors to the darkness of Hades over the “dank ways” (εὐρώεντα κέλευθα, *Od.* 24.10) of the Ocean. Thus, the suitors travel in the opposite direction to Odysseus. On the one hand, Odysseus leaves the darkness of Hades, passes through the misty seas, and finally comes back to the sunlight of Ithaca. On the other hand, the suitors leave the light of Ithaca to travel to the Ocean and finally into the darkness of Hades. Their immaterial nature at this point is signaled by their comparison to bats that fly unseen in the dark.

In fact, it seems that light itself takes away the life of the suitors. At the end of the bloodbath that Odysseus unleashes on the suitors, the dead men are compared to fish caught in nets and dying in the sun (*Od.* 23.384–88). In this way, the end of the *Odyssey* reverses the roles between Odysseus and the suitors. Odysseus wanders at sea in the darkness and is homeless for many years. Upon his return, the suitors become homeless, and they then become compared to fish that live in the sea. The comparison between the suitors and fish emphasizes the suitors' lack of identity and purpose at this point in the narrative. Just like fish, they are all alike and wander in the indeterminate space of the sea without any fixed point of attach. The light of the sun, which symbolizes Odysseus and Ithaca, spells the death of the suitors.¹⁵⁵

Similarly, the *Odyssey* describes how Odysseus is as welcome to Penelope as the sight of land for those who are shipwrecked (*Od.* 23.233–40). While Odysseus was lost at sea, Penelope was similarly lost, since her house hold was turned upside down. With Odysseus's return, the indeterminate space of the sea is replaced by the well-defined social structures of life on land, namely marriage, social status, and an ordered house hold. Odysseus's return, for Penelope as well as for her husband, is a return to the clear light and fastness of the land after a long period of wandering in the darkness of the misty sea.

As a result of his journey, Odysseus not only reestablishes his social status, but also acquires knowledge. As stated in the third line of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus has seen many cities and has come to know the mind of many men (πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἶδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω, *Od.* 1.3). Moreover, Odysseus comes back to Ithaca through a harbor sacred to Phorcys, the Old Man of the Sea (*Od.* 13.96). In this way, the *Odyssey* signals that Odysseus has acquired the divine knowledge that resides beyond the sea. Odysseus has visited a great number of lands and men, but, most important, he has seen the farthest reaches of the sea, all the way into the Ocean and Hades. He has even had a brush with immortality.¹⁵⁶ Odysseus thus returns to Ithaca with the knowledge of what

lies beyond the sea, in terms of not only geography and ethnography, but also cosmology.

Conclusion

These conceptions of the sea endured throughout Antiquity. The final section of Plutarch's dialog *On the Face in the Orb of the Moon* reports the story of a man who comes from a mythical continent located beyond the Ocean. According to the story, the inhabitants of this continent send envoys every thirty years to live on islands located in the middle of the Atlantic, midway between their own continent and the *oikoumene*, the familiar inhabited world (Plut. *De Facie* 941a–f). These islands are characterized by peculiar light, as the sun shines almost continuously while the western sky is in a dim twilight. The vegetation is lush, the climate is temperate, and food grows of its own accord without the need for toil. As a result, the inhabitants spend their days in sacrifices and banquets while spirits (δαίμονες) tend to the god Cronus, who sleeps in a cave under the watchful eye of Zeus. Due to the closeness of the divinity, inhabitants receive omens and revelations directly from the gods in the form of visions and voices.

In this story, Plutarch draws on Homer, Hesiod, and Plato—especially the myth of Atlantis—to rework the ancient lore concerning the western Ocean, such as the Islands of the Blessed, Elysium, and the land of the Hyperboreans. Here again we note that the sea is an intermediary space between the mortal and divine worlds. The indistinct boundary between the two regions is indicated by variations in light, from the perpetual light of immortality to the darkness of death. The area also marks the barrier between different temporal reckonings. Cronus, the god of the Golden Age, lives on an island in between the human world and what lies beyond. The mythical time of the Golden Age thereby mediates between mortal and immortal time, and suggests that the Ocean is the point of transition between these different realities. Finally, the islands lie along an important axis of communication. Divine revelations are offered to the inhabitants of the islands, who then sail to the human continent to spread this knowledge. In Plutarch's treatise, the traveler from these islands reveals knowledge about Demeter, Persephone, and the nature of human mortality. As Nesselrath observes, the Ocean thus serves as a conduit for the transmission of higher knowledge from another world into ours.¹⁵⁷

CHAPTER 2

The theme of inherited excellence pervades the ode. Pindar starts by stating the nobility of the Aleuadae, who are descended from Heracles (lines 2–3). By the same token, Pindar subtly introduces a connection between Perseus and his Thessalian audience, since Perseus was actually Heracles’ great-grandfather, and therefore Thorax’s ancestor.⁵ The patron, and by extension the victor and his family, can thus boast semidivine origins that guarantee their extraordinary excellence.

While excellence characterizes the Thessalian ruling dynasty in general, Pindar also makes particular claims about Hippocleas, namely that he inherited excellence from his father Phricias. Pindar states that Hippocleas followed in his father’s footsteps (τὸ δὲ συγγενὲς ἐμβέβακεν ἵχνεσιν πατρός, line 12) by winning the Pythian crown for the double-course footrace. The claim is metaphorical as well as literal, since Phricias won two Olympic victories for the race in armor and one Pythian crown for the footrace (lines 11–16). Both father and son thus won prizes for running, and one is seen to follow in the footsteps of the other. In fact, the word συγγενὲς “his inborn nature” stresses the essential connection between Hippocleas’s excellence and that of his father.⁶ Thus, from the very beginning of the ode, the ideas of patriarchal lineage and the inherited nature of excellence are emphasized through the succession between Perseus, Heracles, and Thorax, and finally between Phricias and his son Hippocleas.

According to Pindar, the process of transmission of excellence through the generations is like a sea voyage (πλόον).⁷

εὐδαίμων δὲ καὶ ὕμνη-
τὸς οὗτος ἀνὴρ γίνεται σοφοῖς,
ὃς ἂν χερσὶν ἢ ποδῶν ἀρετᾶ κρατήσῃς
τὰ μέγιστ’ ἀέθλων ἔλῃ τόλμα τε καὶ σθένει,
καὶ ζῶων ἔτι νεαρόν
κατ’ αἶσαν υἱὸν ἴδῃ τυχόντα στεφάνων Πυθίων.
ὁ χάλκεος οὐρανὸς οὐ ποτ’ ἀμβατὸς αὐτῷ.
ὅσαις δὲ βροτὸν ἔθνος ἀγλαΐαις ἀ-
πτόμεσθα, περαίνει πρὸς ἔσχατον
πλόον· (Pind. *Pyth.* 10.22–29)

That man is happy and the wise sing of him, who has achieved victory by the excellence of his hands or feet and took the greatest prizes by his courage and strength, and while he lives sees his young son duly awarded Pythian crowns. He cannot walk in the bronze heavens; but he sails to the farthest reach of the glory we mortals can reach.

In the poem, a man acquires glory and takes his rightful place within the family line by accomplishing exploits. If his son succeeds him by achieving similar exploits, then the man has sailed to the ultimate limits of mortal glory. In this view, both the process of the succession of generations and individual lives are sea voyages.

While the metaphor emphasizes glory and pride, it also has a grimmer side. Indeed, by stating that Phricias has reached the ultimate end of the mortal sea voyage of happiness, Pindar brings up a subtle warning about the limitations of mortal happiness. In many of his later odes, Pindar makes this warning explicit, still using the image of a sea voyage. Pindar declares that mortals must not display *hybris*, an attitude that he compares to a foolhardy sailing expedition beyond the Pillars of Heracles.⁸ The image is appropriate within the context of Greek geography and cosmology. As we have seen in [Chapter 1](#), the mythical river Ocean, which can be accessed from the Mediterranean through the Strait of Gibraltar (the Pillars of Heracles) encircles the world. Beyond are located the invisible residences of the gods and the dead, and the area is shrouded in a

veil of otherworldly mist. In this way, the Ocean symbolizes the limitations imposed upon humans. The Ocean marks the boundary between mortals and immortals and emphasizes the inescapability of death, since all must ultimately sail to Hades at the end of life. The Ocean thus constitutes the ultimate frontier (ἐσχατιά), where the mortal sea voyage must end, since passing beyond into immortality is forbidden.⁹ In this manner, Pindar warns Phricias to curb his pride at Hippocleas's success, for human ambitions are subject to the limitations of mortality.

But not everyone is subject to such limitations. Pindar declares that normal mortals cannot cross the bronze heavens, but heroes such as Perseus can find their way beyond the everyday world:

ναυσὶ δ' οὔτε πεζὸς ἰὼν κεν εὐροις
ἐς Ὑπερβορέων ἄγωνα θαυμαστὰν ὁδόν.
παρ' οἷς ποτε Περσεὺς ἐδαΐσατο λαγέτας,
δώματ' ἐσελθὼν (Pind. *Pyth.* 10.29–32)

Neither by foot nor ship could you ever find the extraordinary road to the assembly of the Hyperboreans. Yet once Perseus, the leader of his people, went to their homes and banqueted among them.

Pindar puts Phricias's limited sea voyage to happiness in parallel with Perseus's transcendent journey to the land of perfect bliss among the Hyperboreans. The success of both voyages is due to the son's upholding and continuation of the father's excellence. Indeed, Perseus owes his success in large part to his semidivine nature as the son of Zeus, and Hippocleas owes his success at the Pythian Games to his descent from Phricias. Perseus's impossible exploits (ἀδύνατα) far outshine those of Hippocleas, but some of their glory reflects on Hippocleas.¹⁰ As Köhnken observes, the passage contains a double allusion meaning that Perseus could fly to the Hyperboreans with Hermes' winged sandals while Pindar's winged song could carry Hippocleas's glory beyond the boundaries of the human world.¹¹

Perseus's extraordinary voyage to the land of the Hyperboreans also serves to emphasize the moderate quality of the happiness to which mortals can attain. The adjective μάκαρος (ἀνδρῶν μακάρων ὅμιλον, line 46) describes the Hyperboreans and echoes the felicity of mortal Thessaly that Pindar noted at the very start of the ode (μάκαιρα Θεσσαλία, line 2). The parallel between Hyperborea and Thessaly is strengthened by the fact that both Hyperboreans and Thessalians are northern peoples.¹² Yet the mortal Thessalians live in Northern Greece, while the extraordinary Hyperboreans live in the northernmost regions of the world. The two nations are thus on either side of an asymmetrical analogy on the grounds of their geographical situation as well as their happiness. The Thessalians enjoy the limited felicity of mortals and the Hyperboreans experience the boundless joy of an existence spent on the shores of the Ocean.

Pindar chooses to emphasize Perseus's voyage to the land of the Hyperboreans rather than the more famous Gorgon mission, which is dealt with rather succinctly in lines 46 to 48. Pindar is our only source for Perseus's visit to the Hyperboreans. Whether Pindar himself invented this story or whether other poets and artists represented it, the visit to the Hyperboreans is appropriate in the context of the ode. The episode gives Pindar an opportunity to praise the success of his Thessalian patrons with a positive story while piously emphasizing the limited character of mortal happiness. As Burton notes, the Hyperboreans' blissful existence recalls the carefree life of the gods that Pindar contrasted with the limited felicity of a man who sees his son emulate his own athletic excellence (lines 22–26).¹³ In the land of the Hyperboreans, it is as if Perseus had entered a reverse

image of the mortal world where seemingly every negative aspect of human existence such as disease, old age, toil, and war, had been wiped away. Other ancient testimonia besides Pindar emphasize this point. They indicate that the Hyperboreans, while they are mortal, do not experience death in the same way men do. The Hyperboreans are either extremely long-lived,¹⁴ or they live indefinitely until they tire of existence and leap into the Ocean.¹⁵ By visiting this land, Perseus has crossed the boundaries that limit human existence into the world that exists beyond death and ordinary mortal woes. He sees a forbidden (cf. Pindar's warnings on crossing the Pillars of Heracles) and unattainable (ναυσιὶ δ' οὔτε πεζὸς ἰὼν κεν εὐροις) reality that is accessible only to the gods (lines 29–30 and 48–50). This marks Perseus as a mortal with divine gifts, an intermediary between men and gods.¹⁶

Pindar further marks the difference between Perseus and his Thessalian descendants by claiming that the hero participates in the banquets of the Hyperboreans. The image recalls the perpetual banquets that take place on the Islands of the Blessed, where, according to Pindar himself (*Ol.* 2.68–87), heroes go when they die. Thus, the episode seems to prefigure Perseus's own special destiny after death. While the ordinary mortal Phricias must end the sea journey of his happiness at the frontier of the Ocean, Perseus has access to unlimited joy beyond that boundary.

Beyond the Ocean, Perseus has access to a region where the paradigms of mortal life do not apply. Indeed, Pindar indicates that ordinary means of transportation, namely ship or foot, cannot follow the extraordinary road (θαυμαστὰν ὁδόν) that leads to the land of the Hyperboreans. The way to the Ocean is neither liquid nor solid, for it is at the point of contact between sky and sea. Pindar makes it clear that this frontier region is Perseus's destination when he says that the brazen sky is inaccessible for ordinary mortals, but that Perseus made his way there (lines 26–32). And indeed, it is well known that Perseus uses no ordinary means of transportation to get beyond the Ocean, but from the earliest depictions onward, he flies over the Ocean with Hermes' winged sandals.¹⁷ Perseus's voyage therefore takes him beyond the material world. He flies with the sandals of the messenger god, who travels between gods and men and conducts the souls of the dead to Hades over the waters of the Ocean (cf. the flight of Penelope's dead suitors in the second *Nekyia*, *Od.* 24.11). Perseus therefore attains the land of the Hyperboreans in the way Hermes crosses the intangible boundaries between the worlds of gods, men, and the dead. Perseus's journey is viewed as incorporeal, or at least defying the principles of ordinary materiality. In fact, as mentioned in [Chapter 1](#), the Hesiodic *Shield* 222 says that Perseus flies like a thought (ὃ δ' ὥς τε νόημι' ἐποτάτο), an image that underscores the ethereal nature of Perseus's journey.¹⁸

To accomplish this journey, Perseus follows an extraordinary road (θαυμαστὰν ὁδόν) over the Ocean. The phrase recalls Hesiod's expression to describe the path of the Ocean, πόρον Ὠκεάνοιο, which he uses in his narration of Heracles' conquest of immortality. As discussed in [Chapter 1](#), the path of the Ocean is understood as the horizon, the line between sky and sea. This line defines the boundary between the world of the living and the dead, the material and the immaterial. As we have seen, Hesychius glosses πόρον Ὠκεάνοιο as τὸν ἀέρα, εἰς ὃν αἱ ψυχαὶ τῶν τελευτώντων ἀποχωροῦσιν “the air in which the souls of the dead go away.” Thus Perseus's journey is viewed as similar to that of his descendant Heracles, who reaches the divine world by treading the paths of the Ocean. Pindar's wording in *Pythian* 10 is echoed elsewhere in his poetry, especially in fr. 30 (Snell-Maehler), where he uses the phrase λιπαρὰν ὁδόν to describe the path followed by Themis to go from the sources of Oceanus to the heavens during her marriage ceremony with Zeus.¹⁹ In both cases, Pindar uses the metaphor of a road to describe the point of passage between worlds over the Ocean. Perseus, as a hero with a special destiny, crosses this boundary to reach across the mortal world.

Perseus's accomplishment in crossing the Ocean indicates not only his own excellence, but also the excellence of Zeus's lineage. Indeed, Perseus establishes the ruling dynasty at Tiryns and Mycenae,²⁰ and, in *Pythian* 10, Perseus is the ancestor of the Thessalian dynasty of the Aleuadae. *Pythian* 10 emphasizes that the purpose of Perseus's exploits is the recognition of his legitimacy and inborn excellence as the son of Zeus. Just like his descendant Hippocleas, Perseus displays qualities that liken him to his father. Pindar signals Perseus's commanding place in society by calling him "leader of his people" (λαγέτας, line 31) and describing his visit to the Hyperboreans, his triumph over the Gorgon, and his vengeance over the Seriphians in terms of his courage as well as his descent:

θρασεῖα δὲ πνέων καρδίᾳ
 μόλεν Δανάας ποτὲ παῖς, ἀγέιτο δ' Ἀθάνα,
 ἐς ἀνδρῶν μακάρων ὄμιλον· ἔπεφνέν
 τε Γοργόνα, καὶ ποικίλον κάρα
 δρακόντων φόβαισιν ἤλυθε νασιώταις
 λίθινον θάνατον φέρων. ἐμοὶ δὲ θαυμάσαι
 θεῶν τελεσάντων οὐδὲν ποτε φαίνεται
 ἔμμεν ἄπιστον. (Pind. *Pyth.* 10.44–50)

Once, animated with the boldness of his heart, the son of Danae went there, led by Athena, to the gathering of these happy men; he killed the Gorgon and he came with the head that gleamed with snakes, bringing stony death to the islanders. To me, nothing that the gods bring about ever seems unbelievable.

By calling Perseus the son of Danae, Pindar alludes to his descent from Zeus and the extraordinary story of his birth that marked him out for a special destiny from the start. At the same time, Pindar also evokes the fact that Perseus is the son of an unmarried woman, and therefore has a questionable status that needs to be asserted. Ogden points out that Hesychius glosses the phrase ἐκ λάρνακος "out of the chest" as νόθος "bastard," which indicates a connection, at least in Hesychius's source, between exposure at sea in a chest and illegitimacy.²¹ Nonetheless, illegitimate children, perhaps because of their marginality, are often promised to a high destiny in Greek mythology. The fact that Athena, the goddess who sanctions the patriarchal order as well as kingship, is the one to lead Perseus to the land of the Hyperboreans, is significant in this regard. Athena guides Perseus in his journey toward recognition and integration to his family line, while also marking the point that such incredible exploits cannot take place without divine assistance. Perseus's boldness (θρασεῖα δὲ πνέων καρδίᾳ, line 44) indicates his fitness for an impossible task and the inherent qualities he possesses as a hero. Likewise, in parallel to Perseus's accomplishment and divine assistance, the victor Hippocleas is repeatedly said to have won his crown with divine aid in *Pythian* 10,²² while, as we have seen, his inborn excellence as the son of the athlete Phricias is an important factor for his victory.

For Pindar, the motivation for Perseus's quest is the recognition of his essential identity and excellence as the son of Zeus. These motivations are consistent with other renditions of the myth, although the level of detail and the circumstances vary. According to Pherecydes (*FGrH* 3F10 = schol. Ap. Rhod. IV 1091), Perseus's original motivation for undertaking his quest was linked with protecting Danae's chastity and proving his right to a commanding place in the aristocratic order. Pherecydes writes that once Perseus has reached adolescence on Seriphos (ἡβήσαντος), Polydectes fell in love with Danae but had no idea as to how to sleep with her (ἡράσθη αὐτῆς, ἡπόρει δὲ συγκοιμηθῆναι). For this reason, he organized an *eranos* (a banquet designed to solicit contributions) and invited many men to it, among them Perseus. When Perseus inquired what the price of

attendance was, the response was “a horse,” but Perseus said “the head of the Gorgon.”²³ Therefore, on the sixth day after the feast, when the guests brought their gifts, Polydectes accepted horses from all of them, but demanded the Gorgon’s head from Perseus. Failing this, he would take Danae. Perseus became dejected at this rebuttal and was lamenting his bad luck in the farthest corner of the island (τὸ ἔσχατον τῆς νήσου, perhaps an indication that Perseus was about to visit the ultimate ἔσχατιά) when Hermes appeared, told him to cheer up, and led him away on his quest for the Gorgon’s head.

Apollodorus (2.36), who may have been drawing on fifth-century tragedy,²⁴ offers a similar but clearer version of this story. In his account, the fact that Perseus has grown to manhood is the reason why Polydectes cannot sleep with Danae (Δανάης ἐρασθεῖς, καὶ ἡνδρωμένου Περσέως μὴ δυνάμενος αὐτῇ συνελθεῖν). To circumvent him, Polydectes organizes an eranos,²⁵ and pretends that the price of attendance, the horses, is meant as a contribution for his bid to marry Hippodameia. In an overly bold move, Perseus says that he wouldn’t refuse to give even the Gorgon’s head, so, while Polydectes accepts horses from everyone else, he holds Perseus to his promise and sends him on his quest. Still, according to Apollodorus (2.45), Perseus is able to return from his quest before Polydectes has time to implement his plans regarding Danae, and the young hero finds his mother and the fisherman Dictys supplicating at an altar.²⁶ Perseus then remedies the situation by petrifying Polydectes and his associates and installing Dictys on the throne (2.46).²⁷

The story includes some puzzling elements, especially Perseus blurting out his seemingly inappropriate answer about the Gorgon’s head. Such narrative issues are likely the result of epitomization or abridgement of tragic plots. Nonetheless, both Pherecydes and Apollodorus make it clear that the purpose of Perseus’s Gorgon mission is to defend his mother’s chastity and thereby perhaps also protect his claim to legitimacy and honor. A second but no less important motivation for Perseus is to prove his own worth in a male social setting by accomplishing an extraordinary exploit. Both motivations indicate a fierce desire on the part of Perseus to be recognized as a legitimate member of the aristocracy by virtue of being the son of Zeus. Ogden explains, “Polydectes can be understood to have observed the precocious youth’s eagerness to be accepted as a man, and to be cunningly exploiting this. Such an interpretation, if accepted, provides a further reason for reading Perseus’ Gorgon mission expressly as a myth of maturation.”²⁸

In this line of thought, we may observe that the horses required by Polydectes, while being appropriate for his pretend participation in the horse race to woo Hippodameia, are also significant as a proof of aristocratic status. All of the other men of the court are allowed to supply horses as accepted aristocrats. However, the fatherless Perseus, as a result of his own rash attempt to gain his rightful place among the aristocracy, is asked to accomplish an impossible task, perhaps to emphasize that there is no remedy to his situation.²⁹ But in the end, Perseus does fulfill his promise, thereby proving his divine descent. He avenges the wrongs done to him and to his mother by the Seriphians and establishes himself as a political leader who will later rule his grandfather’s kingdom at Argos.³⁰

In *Pythian* 10, Perseus’s vengeance on the Seriphians (νασιώταις λίθινον θάνατον φέρων “bringing stony death to the islanders,” lines 47–48) serves to prove his excellence and divine descent, since it vindicates Danae’s treatment at the hands of Polydectes. In the context of Pindar’s epinician, Perseus’s vengeance on the Seriphians also provides a counterpart to the absence of Nemesis in the Hyperboreans’ life, which is mentioned just a few lines earlier in the same antistrophe.³¹ Indeed, the scholia interpret the words φυγόντες ὑπέρδικον Νέμεσιν (“escaping severe Retribution,” lines 43–44) as meaning that the Hyperboreans commit no injustices against one another, and therefore are not punished by Nemesis or by the gods for acting unjustly. This interpretation of the scholion, which is generally accepted by scholars, makes good sense in view of the

remainder of the passage.³² Pindar thus presents a further contrast between the land of the Hyperboreans, which Perseus visits, and the land of ordinary mortals, to which he ultimately returns to avenge his mother.³³

Pindar's account of Perseus's quest ends with no mention of the later episodes of his adventures, such as his conquest of Andromeda, his kingship,³⁴ or his important mythical descendants.³⁵ Rather, the ode ends with praise for the victor, hinting that Hippocleas's accomplishments and descendants will be similar to Perseus's. Pindar claims that his ode was effective, since it has earned glory for Hippocleas among his elders and age-mates (ἐν ἄλιξι θησέμεν ἐν καὶ παλαιτέροις "we will place him among his age-mates and elders," line 58). Pindar thus signals that his own song, as well as Hippocleas's athletic prowess, has earned Hippocleas a choice place among the aristocracy, and that among the older generation, he is recognized not only by his father, but also by other members of society. This statement, while it regularly appears in Pindar and pertains to the conventions of the epinician, serves to demonstrate the effectiveness of Pindar's comparison between Perseus and Hippocleas. As Kirkwood puts it, "The closing maxim [θεῶν τελεσάντων οὐδέν ποτε φαίνεται ἔμμεν ἄπιστον, lines 49–50] implicitly strengthens the connection of the mythic exploit with the victory."³⁶

Detailing the effectiveness of his song, Pindar also says that the ode will make Hippocleas an important matter of concern for girls (line 59). He thus indicates that Hippocleas's glory will make him a desirable match for potential brides and allow him to perpetuate the excellence of his lineage. Pindar offers no parallel for this in his narration of the Perseus myth but, as we will see later in this chapter, the theme is very important in Pindar's rendition of Jason's adventures and in Bacchylides' narrative about Theseus.³⁷

Finally, the ode ends with praise for the ruling dynasty of Thessaly, which is embedded in nautical metaphors. Pindar writes κόπαν σχάσον, ταχὺ δ' ἄγκυραν ἔρεισον χθονὶ πρῶραθε, χοιράδος ἄλκαρ πέτρας ("stop the boat, quickly drop the anchor from the prow to the ground," lines 51–52). Pindar takes up the ship metaphor he used earlier in the ode to describe human happiness and reuses it as a metaphor to describe his ode, which has now exhausted its sailing course. Then, after some gnomic statements and a nod to his patron Thorax, Pindar closes the ode by praising Hippocleas's brothers:

ὑψοῦ φέροντι νόμον Θεσσαλῶν
αὖξοντες: ἐν δ' ἀγαθοῖσι κείνται
πατρῷαι κεδναὶ πολίων κυβερνάσιες. (Pind. *Pyth.* 10.70–73)

They uphold and strengthen the laws of the Thessalians; the proper steering of states, which is hereditary, is in the care of good men.

The ode finishes on a final assertion of the importance of patriarchal lineage, not only for individuals, but for the state as a whole, since aristocrats are the pilots of states in their political sea voyage. The navigation of the ship of state at the hands of its leaders mirrors the sea voyage of individuals through life.

Theseus in Bacchylides' *Ode* 17

In Bacchylides' *Ode* 17, a passage at sea also serves to confirm the hero's essential identity as the son of a god and political leader. The themes presented by Bacchylides and even, in many cases, the wording he uses are remarkably similar to Pindar's description of Perseus's exploits in *Pythian* 10. Furthermore, like *Pythian* 10, *Ode* 17 presents the hero's maturation in counterpoint to the political situation in the city of performance.

The genre of *Ode* 17, which was performed on Delos by a chorus of Cean singers at the Delian festival of the Apollonia (also called Delia), is disputed. The poem is usually classified as a dithyramb because of its mythological contents. However, lines 124 to 129, which describe the songs of welcome sung by the young Athenians upon Theseus's reemergence from the sea, seem to indicate that it was a paean.³⁸ Similarly, the date of the poem is disputed. Maehler favors a date in the early 490s,³⁹ which would make *Ode* 17 an almost exact contemporary with *Pythian* 10. Yet, others prefer to date the ode as contemporary with the formation of the Delian League, just after the Persian Wars.⁴⁰ The earlier dating makes the ode the first attestation of the myth and thus suggests that it was Bacchylides' own invention.⁴¹ While this is certainly not impossible, the later dating offers a more probable context by placing the ode within a fairly important group of figurative sources that represent the same myth (Fig. 8).⁴² The later dating also places the ode within the context of Athens's complex cultural and political relations with its allies. As Fearn suggests, the ode attests to a merging of Athenian and Cean identities through Athenian manipulation of allied Cean involvement in *theoriai* to Delos.⁴³ The myth itself, with its thoroughly Athenian background, imposes an Athenian identity on the Ceans' performance.⁴⁴ As Fearn further suggests, Bacchylides, because he was "the Cean representative of Panhellenic poetry of his generation, and a poet who also operated in Athens, was surely in a unique position to produce such a composition and merging of identities."⁴⁵



Figure 8. Attic kylix, ca. 480 BC. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 53.11.4. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, purchase Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1953.

Identity is precisely the topic of *Ode* 17. As Theseus is sailing to Crete with a contingent of Athenian boys and girls destined to be tributes for the Minotaur, a conflict arises between Minos and Theseus over the former's desire for an Athenian girl named

Eriboia. Theseus defends the girl—and most important, his own leadership over the Athenian group. Theseus calls for Minos to stop his advances, and suggests that he is Minos's equal in status by virtue of being the son of Poseidon, while Minos is the son of Zeus. As Ruth Scodel has pointed out, Minos's claim to be the son of Zeus is never in doubt (Theseus addresses him as "son of Zeus" at line 20), but Theseus's is. In fact, Minos so doubts Theseus's claim that he throws his ring into the sea and challenges Theseus to fetch it, which the hero does with a bold dive.

Theseus's opposition to Minos is cast as a sign of his divinely appointed fate. After his initial injunction against Minos, Theseus points out that they are both subject to the all-powerful fate decided by the gods (ἐκ θεῶν μοῖρα παγκρατῆς, line 24), and that the scales of Justice will appoint the appropriate outcome in their conflict (lines 25–28). Theseus returns to this idea at the end of his speech, and declares that if Minos does not respect him and refrain from his attempts on Eriboia, a physical conflict will ensue (lines 45–46), the issue of which will be decided by the divinity (δαίμων κρινεῖ "the divinity will decide," line 46). Thus, the struggle between Theseus and Minos is a form of judicial process designed to let the gods reveal the righteous contender. Theseus declares that both parties are equally subject to fate and the gods' decisions, thus counteracting Minos's tyrannical attitude. Read in political terms, Theseus's contention suggests that Athens has the approval of the gods in taking political leadership and stands against tyranny.

To buttress this claim, Bacchylides opposes Theseus's righteousness with Minos's violent behavior. Bacchylides uses unequivocal terms to describe Minos: μεγαλαύχον βίαν ("overpowering violence," line 23), βροτῶν φέρτατον ("strongest of mortals," lines 32–33), πολέμαρχε Κνωσίων ("warlord of the Cretans," line 39), πολύστονον ὕβριν ("grievous pride," lines 40–41), σὺ δαμάσειας ἀέκοντα ("[if] you were to subdue one against her will," lines 44–45). Minos also appeals to his father Zeus calling him μεγαλοσθενὲς ("of great strength," lines 52 and 67), which further emphasizes Minos's violent demeanor and reliance upon physical strength. To this violence, Bacchylides opposes Theseus's military valor, which brings to mind a civilized battle formation as opposed to brute strength. Bacchylides calls Theseus μενέκτυπον ("steadfast in the noise of battle," line 1), χαλκοθώρακα ("with a bronze breastplate," lines 14–15), and ἀρέταιχμος ("good spearman," line 47), all words that signify a military setting. Finally, Theseus also threatens Minos with a physical contest: πρόσθε χειρῶν βίαν δειξόμεν ("before we will show the strength of our hands," lines 45–46). The use of the word βίαν "violence," by recalling the characterization of Minos as violent in line 23, emphasizes Theseus's ability to retaliate in kind if provoked.⁴⁶

Bacchylides opposes Theseus's righteous defense of Eriboia with Minos's selfish attempt on the girl. In doing so, the poet makes it clear that he means to contrast Minos and Theseus's worth as leaders. Theseus tells Minos, ὅσιον οὐκέτι τεῶν ἔσω κυβερνᾶς φρενῶν θυμόν ("you are no longer pi loting a pious spirit in your mind," lines 21–23). The implication is that Minos cannot steer his desires and actions in a manner that is appropriate to his status. The nautical metaphor in the verb κυβερνᾶς "you pi lot" strongly recalls the "ship of state" metaphor that we encountered earlier in Pindar's *Pythian* 10. In Pindar's poem, this metaphor was part of an assertion that inherited excellence allowed for the sound government of cities and was integrated in a broader context where the life of mortals was compared to a sea voyage. In Bacchylides' ode, the ship of state metaphor appears as an allusion to the tyrannical Minoan thalassocracy, as opposed to the rule of Athens, which is presented as measured and just in the figure of Theseus.⁴⁷ Minos is a bad captain for the ship of state, despite his descent from Zeus, and Theseus intends to set the course of his navigation right.

Indeed, Theseus's reward for proving his legitimacy will be leadership over the Athenians. Bacchylides writes,

Κρονίδας
 δέ τοι πατήρ ἄναξ τελεῖ
 Ποσειδᾶν ὑπέρτατον
 κλέος χθόνα κατ' ἠΐδενδρον.
 ὧς εἶπε: τῷ δ' οὐ πάλιν
 θυμὸς ἀνεκάμπτετ'. (Bacchylides 17.77–82)

Your father, the king Poseidon son of Cronus, will grant you the highest glory across the well-wooded earth. So he spoke, and his heart did not shrink back.

Minos presents Poseidon's future gift of κλέος in epic-sounding terms, thus adding to the martial aspect of the ode. Furthermore, the fact that Theseus's glory will be spread on earth recalls Athenian hegemony under the guise of Panhellenic glory.

Theseus's boldness when he addresses Minos (θάρσος "courage," line 50) indicates that he places himself confidently in a position of leadership over the group of young Athenians. Minos himself, in his overconfident challenge to Theseus, indicates that the young hero will need courage (θράσει, line 63) to dive down into the sea and be recognized as the son of Poseidon. Theseus's boldness and leadership in Bacchylides recall Perseus's courage in Pindar's *Pythian* 10 (θρασεῖα πνέων καρδίᾳ "breathing spirited courage," line 44) and his epithet of λαγέτας ("the leader of his people," line 31). Both heroes affirm their legitimacy and leadership by accomplishing their exploits. In the case of Perseus, the myth is used to address individual affirmation, inherited excellence, and the succession of generations. In the case of Theseus, a broader political theme emerges in addition to these issues, as the young hero can be seen to represent Athens itself in the process of affirming its leadership of the Delian League.

As in the myth of Perseus, legitimacy is a crucial issue for Theseus, since he is the son of an unmarried woman and therefore must prove his descent. Our sources are divided on the identity of Theseus's father. In the *Iliad* 1.265 (= *Scutum* 182) and Ovid *Metamorphoses* 7.404, Theseus is said to be the son of Aegeus. In the *Odyssey* 11.630–33, Theseus is said to be the son of a god, most likely meaning Poseidon. Plutarch claims that Theseus's lineage was uncertain (*Thes.* 2.1), and that while he was the son of Aegeus (3.1), a report was spread that he was the son of Poseidon while he was growing up in Troezen (6.1). In Apollodorus 3.208,⁴⁸ Diodorus 4.59.1, and Hyginus *Fabulae* 37, both Aegeus and Poseidon had intercourse with Aethra the same night, but Poseidon allowed Aegeus, who was childless, to raise Theseus. Tzetzes ad Lyc. 580 seems to concur with this version of the story when he names Theseus in a list of men who were raised by mortals and said to be their sons but were really the sons of Zeus and Apollo.

This last tradition seems to stem from drama—the action happens over a single day, there is a possibility for dramatic mistakes, and so on—and strongly recalls other important myths in which legitimacy and the succession of generations are crucial, namely those of Perseus and Telephus, which were also popular in fifth-century Athenian drama.⁴⁹ A parallel can also be drawn with the story of Heracles' birth, in which Zeus took the appearance of Amphitryon, the hero's human foster father. In the story of Theseus's double descent from Poseidon and Aegeus, the king's childlessness and Poseidon's "gift" of Theseus emphasize the idea that the line of Athenian kings had to continue despite the lack of a male heir. Poseidon allowed this continuation as an act of benevolence toward Athens. While it has been recognized that fosterage is a common motif of myths of maturation,⁵⁰ it is important to point out that the fosterage of a god's son by a man underscores the double status of the young hero as both human and divine. Therefore, in this narrative, Theseus is doubly legitimate as a leader for the Athenians, since he is the son of a god and the son of an Athenian king. This is an important point in Bacchylides' ode, where Theseus is called the descendant of Pandion, Aegeus's ancestor

(line 15), but also proves his descent from Poseidon with his leap into the sea.

Theseus's exploit is the moment to prove his special status as a semidivine hero. While Minos presents the fetching of the ring as an impossible feat, an *adynaton*, Theseus boldly takes up the challenge and proves his special status as the son of Poseidon. The challenge and Theseus's reaction recall Perseus's visit to the Hyperboreans in *Pythian* 10, which is presented as an *adynaton* by Pindar. Like Perseus, Theseus contemplates a hidden reality that is out of human reach. At the bottom of the sea, he is brought to the home of Poseidon by dolphins (lines 99–101), Theseus sees the dances of the Nereids (lines 100–108), and meets Amphitrite (lines 109–11). Finally, the goddess gives him tokens of recognition, a purple cloak and a wreath given to her as a wedding gift by Aphrodite (lines 112–16). In this way, Theseus reaches beyond the *eschatia* of the sea and into the world of the gods, much in the way Perseus surpasses the boundary of the Ocean, which forms the ultimate limit of mortal sea voyages.

Bacchylides emphasizes the otherworldly nature of Theseus's adventure by saying that the dive takes him directly to the underwater ἄλσος "sacred grove" of Poseidon.

ἀλλ' εὖ-
πάκτων ἐπ' ἰκρίων
σταθεῖς ὄρουσε, πόντιόν τέ νιν
δέξατο θελημὸν ἄλσος. (Bacchylides 17.83–85)

But getting up on the well-built deck, he leapt, and the marine grove received him willingly.

Sacred groves (*alsê*) were planted gardens or well-tended copses of wild trees in which a source of running water was always found.⁵¹ They could include statues or small shrines, and were meant to be places of beauty and tranquility. In the Greek imagination, an *alsos* was a *locus amoenus*, which recalled the ideal beauty of the other world. For this reason, sacred groves were thought to be points of communication between men and gods. Humans can enter the divine world through an *alsos*. For instance, the maiden Aphaia disappears in a sacred grove of Artemis to escape a pursuer and joins the goddess's retinue.⁵² Her disappearance indicates that she has left the mortal, visible world to enter the invisible world of the gods.

In our ode, the *alsos* is not a point of contact with the other world, but rather is in the other world altogether. Indeed, the grove is at the bottom of the sea, out of the reach of humans. The trees that would normally decorate the grove can be imagined as large seaweeds, and the dancing Nereids replace the resident Nymphs. The fact that this sacred grove is underwater, rather than simply containing a source of water, is strangely appropriate. As we have seen in [Chapter 1](#), springs and other waterways are gateways to the other world. This particular *alsos* is submerged in water because it is located in the world of the gods.

Thus, by visiting Poseidon's *alsos*, Theseus disappears under the sea to catch a glimpse of the divine world. Bacchylides emphasizes the invisible character of the place by using visual imagery. Theseus sees the Nereids (ἰδὼν, line 101), from whose limbs a brightness shines like a flame (ἀπὸ γὰρ ἀγλαῶν λάμπε γύων σέλας ὥτε πυρός, lines 103–5). The shining bodies of the Nereids contrast with the darkness that prevails under the sea and casts the scene as a divine epiphany. In fact, despite the beauty of the grove and of the Nereids, Theseus is frightened at the sight (ἔδεισ', line 102), which is the habitual reaction of any mortal witnessing a divine epiphany in Greek mythology.⁵³

In addition to a point of contact with the divine, sacred groves were also a point of contact with the dead. Indeed, *alsê* were often thought to contain entrances to the Underworld.⁵⁴ In particular, the *alsos* of Poseidon in Athens, which is an appropriate point

of comparison given the context of Bacchylides' ode, was thought to contain a door to Hades where Theseus himself and his sidekick Pirithous descended in their attempt to capture Persephone.⁵⁵ Alternatively, the heroes are also said to have performed their katabasis at Taenarum, a well-known gateway to the Underworld that was also an allos of Poseidon.⁵⁶ Whether or not Bacchylides intended to make this connection with the sacred grove of Poseidon by having Theseus dive into a marine allos, it is clear in the ode that everyone present expects the hero to die as a result of his dive. Indeed, the Athenians mourn for Theseus (lines 92–96). Also, Minos is surprised when Theseus dives (lines 86–87) and orders the ship to sail on (lines 87–89), apparently believing that the youth will die, or wanting to make sure that he does.⁵⁷ Theseus's dive is thus a voyage beyond death comparable to Perseus's encounter with the Gorgon or his visit to the Hyperboreans, who live beyond the confines of death.⁵⁸

But Theseus, like Perseus, remains alive and resurfaces. His return takes the form of an epiphany, a reappearance out of the invisible world. Theseus appears (φάνη "he appeared," line 119) by the prow of the ship, unwetted by his dive into the sea, and the gifts of the gods shine about him (λάμπει δ' ἄμφι γυίοις θεῶν δῶρ', lines 123–24). Theseus is thus described with the same words as the Nereids, who made their own epiphany under the sea.⁵⁹ This passage on the other side of the world, inhabited by gods, underscores Theseus's heroic status as the son of a god and confirms his intermediary status between mortals and immortals. His survival of a close brush with death emphasizes the fact that he will live on to pursue his heroic destiny as the son of a god as well as continue Aegeus's political leadership over Athens. Indeed, as we have seen earlier, the reward for Theseus's dive is κλέος and a commanding position in the Athenian social order.

Theseus's heroic status is a result of his close connection to the divine. In his conclusion of the episode, Bacchylides indicates that Theseus accomplishes his exploit with the help of the gods: Ἀπιστον ὃ τι δαίμονες θέλωσιν οὐδὲν φρενοῦραις βροτοῖς ("nothing that the gods accomplish is unbelievable for wise mortals," lines 117–18). With these lines, Bacchylides indicates that Poseidon, Amphitrite, and the gods in general were the agents and helpers of Theseus's exploit. The incredible character of the event serves to mark Theseus's special nature and status. Bacchylides' conclusion of Theseus's visit to Poseidon's palace recalls Pindar's conclusion of Perseus's visit to the Hyperboreans, ἐμοὶ δὲ θαυμάσαι θεῶν τελεσάντων οὐδὲν ποτε φαίνεται ἔμμεν ἄπιστον ("to me nothing that the gods accomplish can ever seem unbelievable," *Pyth.* 10.48–50). In both cases, the help of the gods is a sign of divine favor that places the youths in a different category from ordinary mortals.

Theseus receives tangible proofs of the divine favor he enjoys. Amphitrite gives him a purple cloak and a crown of roses that was given to her by Aphrodite as a wedding present (lines 112–16). Many scholars have pointed out that Amphitrite's gifts have important sexual connotations.⁶⁰ In addition to emphasizing Theseus's recognition as the son of Poseidon, they make him beautiful and desirable, in particular the wreath of Aphrodite, which may have the power to make the wearer sexually attractive.⁶¹ Like the victor Hippocleas in Pindar's *Pythian* 10.59, Theseus's exploit emphasizes his inherited excellence and paternal recognition, provides him with κλέος "glory," and also makes him an important matter of concern for the opposite sex. In fact, as pointed out by Danek, Amphitrite's crown symbolizes both sexual attractiveness and an athletic victory, as Theseus struggles in an agonistic match with Minos.⁶² Thus, Bacchylides stresses an important result of Theseus's recognition as the son of Poseidon, namely, his readiness for interaction with the opposite sex and marriage.⁶³ As noted by Segal and others, Minos's behavior toward Eriboia denotes an uncontrolled, tyrannical way to express sexuality. In contrast, Theseus's defense of the girl and the facts that he receives presents from

Amphitrite, who is Poseidon's lawful wife, and that she gives him a present that was a wedding gift indicate that Theseus stands for upholding the rules of proper aristocratic marriage.⁶⁴

Theseus's encounter with Amphitrite is not unique to Bacchylides' narrative and can be found on several painted vases of the same period.⁶⁵ It is impossible to tell from these depictions whether or not any sexual connotations were intended or understood in the scene. However, Hyginus's much later account in *Astronomica* 2.5 preserves a number of traditions concerning the origin of Amphitrite's gifts, which all agree in giving them an erotic significance, especially the wreath. Hyginus first reports that the constellation of the wreath (Corona) originated with Ariadne's crown, which she received from Venus and the Horae when she married Liber. Alternatively, Hyginus says that the crown was Liber's gift to Ariadne in exchange for her virginity.⁶⁶ In both of these traditions, the crown is associated with sexual attractiveness.

The connection with Theseus is tenuous until Hyginus comes to his third alternative, where he says that the constellation Corona originated with a crown made by Vulcan with gold and Indian gems that shone like daylight and allowed Theseus to find his way out of the Labyrinth. While the text does not state how Theseus received this crown, it seems plausible that Ariadne either was wearing it or gave it to him as a gift. In this latter case, the story seems to mean that Theseus's exploit (killing the Minotaur) earned him Ariadne's favor, and perhaps her virginity. Hyginus then reports a fourth alternative tradition, according to which Liber left the crown he had received from Venus at a place thereafter named Stephanos, "the Crown," in the Argolid before descending into Hades to fetch Semele. Upon his return, Liber placed the crown among the stars. In this case, the crown is also Venus' gift, and Liber probably has it as a token of his connection to Ariadne.

Finally, in fifth place, Hyginus recounts the same narrative as Bacchylides, according to which Theseus quarreled with Minos over Eriboia, but the object of the quarrel soon became the legitimacy of Theseus's birth. In Hyginus's narrative as in Bacchylides' ode, Theseus leaps into the sea to fetch Minos's ring. However, in Hyginus's text, Theseus is brought before the Nereids by a large pod of dolphins, and the Nereids give him Minos's ring. Thetis instead of Amphitrite then gives Theseus a crown shining with jewels that she originally received from Venus.⁶⁷

It is unclear which of the traditions reported by Hyginus, if any, would have been known to Bacchylides,⁶⁸ and if Bacchylides himself is the source for Hyginus's last alternative. A contemporary painting by Micon located in the Theseion also depicted Theseus's leap.⁶⁹ Whatever the relationship between the different sources, all the traditions make it clear that the gifts Theseus receives in the sea are connected with sexual attractiveness and eroticism. As Ruth Scodel has demonstrated, these gifts tilt the balance of power in the ode in Theseus's favor and thwart Minos's hope for an easy victory.⁷⁰ While both Minos and Theseus are recognized as the sons of gods, the gift of sexual attractiveness marks Theseus as the favorite and establishes him as a positive foil to Minos's violent and unjustified sexual attack on Eriboia.

Theseus's dive into the sea also emphasizes the sexual and erotic aspects of the story. In Greek mythology, diving is often associated with love, especially the Leucadian leap (see [Chapter 5](#)), which can cleanse one's soul from love, as it reportedly did for Sappho and others (Strabo 10.2.9), but the reverse is also true. In many cases, falling in love or pursuing love is represented in terms of a leap into the sea, as in the *Anacreonta* (fr. 31 Page) and in the story of Alpheius's dive under the sea in Moschus's poem (fr. 3 Gow). Another parallel can be found in the story of Enalus, to be studied in detail in [Chapter 4](#). This Lesbian hero dove into the sea to save his beloved, who was to be cast into the water as a sacrifice to Amphitrite. Like Theseus, Enalus later reappeared (he rode a dolphin to

shore) and became known as a favorite of Poseidon. The physical rush of a young man's leap into the sea can be understood as a metaphor for the mental rush of emotion and desire felt by this young man when falling in love.⁷¹

In the marine context of the ode, the dolphins that lead Theseus to Poseidon's palace are also significant. The dolphins provide a convenient symbol for the poet to represent many of the themes of the ode in a unified way. First, the extraordinary image of Theseus swimming with dolphins under the sea (lines 97–98) is useful esthetically for Bacchylides in setting the stage for the marvelous sights Theseus is to contemplate under the sea. The connection of dolphins with Poseidon as a marine god is obvious.⁷² Furthermore, the role of dolphins as Theseus's guides is appropriate: they were thought to be lucky and to announce good navigation.⁷³ Dolphins were also known to be very fond of music, which is appropriate in the context of Bacchylides' choral ode.⁷⁴ Euripides, *Helen* 1454–55 even compares the dolphin's bounds to choral dances (καλλιχόρων δελφίνων, see [Chapter 4](#)).

Dolphins also bring less obvious connections into the ode which may have been, at least in part, on the minds of the audience. As shown by Calame, Theseus's coming-of-age is connected in many ways to Apollo, especially Apollo Delphinus. Indeed, it is in the Athenian Delphinion that Theseus was said to have been purified of the blood of the monsters he killed during his crossing of Megaris, as well as the blood he shed in his murder of the Pallantides. Furthermore, he offered the Marathonian Bull to Delphinus, and was recognized by Aegeus on the spot where the Delphinion was later built.⁷⁵ According to Graf, Apollo Delphinus was in many ways tied to the maturation of the youth—a connection that we will explore in detail in [Chapter 4](#)—and the god was also tied to the central institutions of the polis, such as the justice system, oath taking, and *hetairiai*.⁷⁶ Thus, Bacchylides 17, while officially addressed to Delian Apollo (lines 130–32), may in fact subtly recall the connections between the legend of Theseus and the Athenian cult of Apollo Delphinus. This god is highly appropriate in the context of the ode, since his cult brings together the issues of coming-of-age and political life, which is precisely the issue at play in the narrative. Theseus, in the process of coming-of-age, enters political life by winning a contest with an enemy of his state and by taking leadership of the Athenian contingent.

Jason in Pindar's *Pythian* 4

Political life is deeply intertwined with the myth of Jason's coming-of-age in Pindar's *Pythian* 4. Indeed, as Braswell explains, *Pythian* 4 was meant not strictly as an epinician, but rather as a political piece.⁷⁷ While the ode refers to King Arcesilaus's victory in the chariot race at the Pythian Games of 462 BC, the king's athletic victory is celebrated in *Pythian* 5.⁷⁸ The real motive for the composition of *Pythian* 4, still according to Braswell, was the political unrest at Cyrene at the time. Indeed, a recent uprising led by the aristocrat Demophilus, who later sought refuge at Thebes, had seriously threatened the ruling dynasty of the Euphemids, which had also suffered from dissent throughout the previous century.⁷⁹ The celebration of Arcesilaus's victory in 462 and the accompanying ode offered a good occasion for political reconciliation with Demophilus, which Pindar pleads for at the end of the ode (lines 493–533). The reconciliation would doubtless have been arranged in advance, so as not to take the king unawares. In fact, according to the scholia to *Pythian* 4.467, Demophilus himself paid for the ode. Pindar's role appears to have been the careful staging of a public demonstration of Arcesilaus's clemency, in which the king could have announced Demophilus's recall in a dramatic manner at the end of the performance.⁸⁰ In the ode, Pindar demonstrates that the Euphemids were divinely chosen to rule Cyrene and should remain in place. Pindar also advocates for

social concord by pleading for Demophilus's recall.⁸¹ To support his claims, Pindar uses the well-known Argonautic myth to show the descent of the Euphemids from one of Jason's companions and to emphasize the question of kingship by birthright through Jason's quest.⁸²

At the start of the ode, Pindar puts the expedition of the Argonauts in relation with Arcesilaus's family by recounting one of the foundation myths of Cyrene.⁸³ According to Pindar, Medea prophesies to the Argonauts that the descendants of Euphemus will colonize the city. Euphemus, one of Jason's companions and the ancestor of Arcesilaus's line, receives a clod of earth from the god Triton during a halt in Libya on the Argonauts' return journey from Colchis. Unfortunately, the clod gets lost in the sea and the Euphemids must colonize the island of Thera, where the clod of Libyan soil washes up. Eventually, still according to Medea's prophecy, the Delphic Pythia will announce to Battus, a descendant of Euphemus living as a colonist on Thera, that he must be the leader of a new colony at Cyrene and fulfill the divinely appointed task. Pindar concludes his narration by pointing out that the current king, Arcesilaus, stands in the eighth generation after Battus:

ἡ μάλα δὴ μετὰ καὶ νῦν, ὥστε φοινικανθέμου ἥρος ἀκμῶ,
παισὶ τούτοις ὄγδοον θάλλει μέρος Ἀρκεσίλας:
τῷ μὲν Ἀπόλλων ἅ τε Πυθῶ κῦδος ἐξ ἀμφικτιόνων ἔπορεν
ἱπποδρομίας, ἀπὸ δ' αὐτὸν ἐγὼ Μοῖσαισι δῶσω
καὶ τὸ ἀγῆρυσον νάκος κριοῦ: μετὰ γὰρ
κεῖνο πλευσάντων Μινυῶν, θεόπομποί σφισιν τιμαὶ φύτευθεν.
(Pind. *Pyth.* 4.64–69)

And nowadays too, after a long time, just as in the height of the red-flowered spring, Arcesilaus flourishes, the eighth one of their children. On the one hand, Apollo and Pytho, through the Amphictyons, gave him glory in the chariot race. On the other hand, I will tell to the Muses about him and the all-golden ram fleece. Indeed, this was what the Minyans sailed for, and their heaven-sent glory took root.

With this account of the colonization of Cyrene, Pindar establishes that the rule of the Euphemids at Cyrene is legitimate because it was divinely appointed, as revealed by both Medea and the Delphic Pythia. By using a μέν ... δέ ... construction, Pindar connects Arcesilaus's god-given athletic glory with the divine help received by the Argonauts on their expedition for the Golden Fleece (θεόπομποι "guided by the divinity"). Throughout the passage, Pindar uses a vegetal metaphor to emphasize the deep-rooted connections between the Euphemids and their mythical ancestors as well as the dynasty's current flourishing. Thus, just as in the cases of Perseus and Hippocleas in *Pythian* 10 and Theseus in Bacchylides' *Ode* 17, the Euphemids and Arcesilaus are seen to prosper because of their essential identity as members of a family line that enjoys divine favor.

To support the Euphemids' claim to legitimacy, Pindar develops the story of Jason's recognition and legitimacy as the ruler of Iolcos against his usurping uncle Pelias. Jason's legitimate claim to the throne is unique to Pindar's narrative. In the *Odyssey* 11.254, Hesiod fr. 37, Apollodorus 1.107, and Apollonius Rhodius 1.1–15, Pelias is the rightful heir to the throne. Apparently, Pindar deviated from the tradition or chose to tell this version of the story to support the aristocratic rule of the Euphemids.

At the beginning of Pindar's narration, Jason is unknown in Iolcos, but when the locals first see him, Jason's special status is instantly clear to them.⁸⁴ Jason is called "extraordinary" (ἐκπαγλός, line 79) and is compared to gods and heroes such as Apollo, Ares, Otus, Ephialtes, and Tityus. Jason's demonstration of unusual courage (γνώμας

ἀταρβάκτοιο “his unshaken will,” line 84) as he stands in the marketplace is also an indication of a special status and recalls Perseus’s and Theseus’s heroic courage in *Pythian* 10 and Bacchylides’ *Ode* 17. In the eyes of the Thessalians, Jason belongs with heroes and gods; he is above normal mortals.

In their speculation about Jason’s identity, the Thessalians mention Ares as “the husband of Aphrodite” and mention that Tityus was shot by Artemis—he attempted to rape Leto—as a warning to keep one’s desire to persons within one’s reach. Both of the elements give the passage an important erotic overtone.⁸⁵ These allusions to erotic themes bring Jason’s sexual maturity to the forefront at the beginning of the narrative and prefigure the important roles Aphrodite and love are to play in Jason’s relationship with Medea (lines 213–19). Unlike Theseus, who acquires sexual attractiveness with Amphitrite’s gifts, Jason is already attractive, and will use this attractiveness to his own advantage in securing Medea’s help.⁸⁶

Pelias immediately recognizes Jason as the single-sandaled man an oracle told him to fear (lines 95–97).⁸⁷ His surprise at seeing the single sandal (τάφε “he was surprised,” line 95) recalls Minos’s surprise at Theseus’s leap from the boat in Bacchylides’ ode (τάφεν “he was surprised,” line 86) and indicates a reversal in the fate of both kings. As Scodel has demonstrated in her analysis of Bacchylides’ ode, Minos’s surprise indicates the point when he becomes aware that fate is favoring Theseus.⁸⁸ Likewise, Pelias knows at this point that his rule will end. Jason, by coming to Iolcos, is fulfilling his divinely appointed fate, just as Theseus in Bacchylides’ *Ode* 17 insisted on fate as the deciding factor in his contest with Minos.

Despite his fated accession to the throne, Jason must still prove his lineage. Pelias challenges Jason’s legitimacy with an insult to his mother and the implication that he does not know his father (lines 97–99).⁸⁹ This challenge from a defiant Pelias parallels the challenges of Polydectes to Perseus and Minos to Theseus, which are crucial in establishing the youths’ identity and legitimate birth. Jason responds by calmly naming his family members and recounting his education with Chiron (lines 102–19). Jason is finally recognized by his father Aeson (lines 120–23), who feels pride at seeing his son’s beauty and excellence (lines 122–23). This sentiment recalls Phricias’s happiness in *Pythian* 10, where Pindar insisted on the question of inherited excellence. In *Pythian* 4, Aeson’s happiness at seeing Jason’s excellence emphasizes the fact that Jason is Aeson’s legitimate descendant and the legitimate heir to the throne of Iolcos (ἀρχαίαν κομίζων πατρός ἐμοῦ βασιλευομένην “bringing my father’s ancient right to rule,” line 106). Jason’s legitimacy as Aeson’s descendant therefore contrasts with Pelias’s unlawful rule (οὐ κατ’ αἶσαν “not in accordance with destiny,” line 107) and highlights the issues of legitimacy addressed in the myth as well those at stake in the political disturbances at Cyrene.

To obtain the throne, Jason does not struggle with Pelias, but rather proposes an arrangement. Jason agrees to give Pelias the cattle and fields that made him rich, but he claims the royal scepter for himself (152–55). Jason declares that he wants to succeed his father and grand father as king to protect justice for his people and prevent strife between his partisans and those of Pelias. Thus, in Pindar’s account, Jason’s enterprise aims at a peaceful and just succession between generations and at the avoidance of strife between rival factions. This is precisely the manner of government that Pindar recommends Arcesilaus to practice (*Pyth.* 4.259–99), in particular when he pleads for the recall of the dissident Demophilus who had been exiled in Thebes (279–99). Pindar’s ode thus addresses the specifics of Cyrene’s difficult political situation and presents Arcesilaus in a positive light as the proponent of concord among the aristocracy by comparing him to Jason.⁹⁰

In view of Jason’s proven legitimacy, Pelias agrees to surrender the scepter. However,

Pelias specifies that before ascending the throne, Jason must take his place in an expedition to bring the Golden Fleece back to Greece along with the soul of Phrixus.

κέλεται γὰρ ἔαν ψυχὰν κομίζαι
Φρίξος ἐλθόντας πρὸς Αἰήτα θαλάμους
δέρμα τε κριοῦ βαθύμαλλον ἄγειν (Pind. *Pyth.* 4.159–61)

For Phrixus commands us to retrieve his soul by going to the halls of Aeetes and to bring back the deep-fleeced ram skin.

Pelias claims that he is too old to accomplish the task laid on him by Phrixus, and that Jason must go instead. Pelias thus pretends to let a younger generation, represented by Jason, replace his own. In reality, Pelias is tasking his nephew with an impossible quest, an adynaton, much like Polydectes and Minos for Perseus and Theseus (cf. Apollod. 1.109). However, in Pindar's narrative, the quest for the Golden Fleece is presented as part of Jason's negotiation with Pelias in order to claim his throne in a spirit of consensus and social peace. Such motivation is clearly related to the ode's context of performance, when Arcesilaus wanted to emphasize social consensus rather than strife.

In the later accounts of Diodorus Siculus 4.40–55 and Apollodorus 1.107, Jason is living in Iolcos under the rule of Pelias. In these versions of the myth, Jason undertakes the quest in order to accomplish a glorious deed, as do his comrades in *Pythian* 4 (lines 185–87). The demigods (ἡμυθέοισιν, line 12) who form the crew of the Argo accompany Jason in order to avoid the shame of remaining home away from danger and in order to gain glory by accomplishing an exploit together with their age-mates.⁹¹ These lines recall the choice made by Achilles to go fight at Troy instead of remaining at home, and they also emphasize the fact that the story concerns coming-of-age, in which one's age-mates play an important part.⁹² The fact that Jason will be the leader among a group of demigods is also interesting as a parallel to Arcesilaus's situation, since the king wants to present himself as the leader among a group of prominent aristocrats. Perhaps for this reason, Pindar tactfully fails to mention that Jason himself is not a demigod.

The Argonauts' quest is a colossal one: they must retrieve not only the Golden Fleece, but also the soul of Phrixus (line 159).⁹³ Therefore, the voyage to Colchis can be seen as a journey into the invisible in search of the shade of a dead man. For this reason, the prophet Mopsus starts the expedition with the following invocation:

ἀρχὸς ἐν πρύμνῃ πατέρ' Οὐρανιδᾶν ἐγ-
χεικέραννον Ζῆνα, καὶ ὠκυπόρους
κυμάτων ῥιπὰς ἀνέμους τ' ἐκάλει νύ-
κτας τε καὶ πόντου κελεύθους
ἅματά τ' εὐφρονα καὶ φιλίαν νόστοιο μοῖραν· (*Pyth.* 4.194–96)

... the leader, on the prow, called on the father of the Ouranids, Zeus who hurls the thunderbolt, and the rush of the rapid waves, and the winds, and the nights, and the paths of the sea, and the calm days and the happy fate of their return.

Mopsus's prayer addresses the winds, the sky, and the sea, which is an appropriate invocation at the outset of navigation. However, the remainder of the prayer invokes the nights and the paths of the sea, and thus gives a more precise idea of the Argonauts' destination. They are about to sail beyond the brightness of the mortal world into the darkness of the invisible world using the paths of the sea. Indeed, the opposition between sky and sea in the prayer suggests that the Argonauts are setting course for the line of the horizon. Mopsus's call on "the paths of the sea" recalls Hesiod's use of the same metaphor

(πόρον Ὠκεάνοιο “the path, the ford of the Ocean,” *Theog.* 292). This prayer also recalls Pindar’s own use of the metaphor in *Pythian* 10.30 when he describes the meeting point of sky and sea through which Perseus passes to reach the land of the Hyperboreans (θαυμάσταν ὁδόν “the extraordinary road”). The Argonauts are about to sail to the ultimate limits of the world, and intend to cross the boundary of the sea into the invisible lands of the dead and the gods.

This is precisely what Pindar describes in the lines that follow. The Argonauts enter the Inhospitable Sea (πόντος Ἄξεινος, line 203), whose grim name suggests that the sailors have left the familiar Mediterranean to enter the forbidden seas beyond. Guarding the passage through the Inhospitable Sea are the Clashing Rocks, the Symplegades, which crush ships and spell the death of sailors. While Pindar deals with the episode very briefly (lines 206–11), other accounts attest to the nature of the journey through the Clashing Rocks. According to Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 2.317–40 and 549–610, the Argonauts are instructed by Phineus to let a dove fly between the Clashing Rocks and then to sail through themselves if the dove makes it across alive. Dramatically, the bird barely passes through and leaves a few tail feathers behind, which gives the signal that the men can sail through too, although they leave behind part of the poop and its ornament (2.602). The dove episode is significant. As noted in [Chapter 1](#), we know from a passage of the *Odyssey* and a fragment of Moero that doves were said to bring ambrosia to Zeus from the Ocean.⁹⁴ We also know that the mouth of the Black Sea was the location of the island of Leuke, the “White Island,”⁹⁵ which took its name from the large flocks of white seabirds that inhabited it and kept Achilles’ tomb.⁹⁶ The soul of Achilles, along with the ghosts of other famous warriors such as Ajax and other mythological figures such as Helen and Iphigeneia, inhabit the island.⁹⁷ Passing Leuke by day, sailors reported hearing the clash of weapons, and by night, they heard the sounds of joyful banqueting.⁹⁸ Achilles even appeared to sailors as a ghost.⁹⁹ The Argonauts, by entering the Black Sea, therefore enter the realm of the gods and the dead, where ambrosia is gathered on the wings of white doves and where the ghosts of heroes dwell. For this reason, according to Mackie, the journey of the Argonauts to Colchis can be seen as a katabasis into Hades through the sea.¹⁰⁰ The purpose of the trip is to recover the restless soul of Phrixus and thus reestablish harmony between the Underworld and the surface.

Once they arrive in Colchis, the Argonauts encounter Aeetes, the son of Helios (lines 242–43). Thus, they pass through the land of the dead to arrive on the shores of the Ocean, where the Sun and other celestial bodies dwell. Indeed, Mimnermus fr. 11 and 11a (West) places the city of Aeetes on the shore of Oceanus, and Pindar himself indicates later in the ode (*Pyth.* 4.250–52) that the Argonauts sail on the encircling Ocean when they leave Colchis. Furthermore, according to Apollodorus 1.129, Medea’s mother is the Oceanid Idyia,¹⁰¹ a name that recalls the special knowledge that resides beyond the Ocean, especially in divinities such as Proteus, Nereus, the Graeae, and Oceanus himself (see [Chapter 1](#)). Medea’s own gift of prophecy (line 11) emphasizes this point: the Argonauts have reached the land of the gods, where divine knowledge is held. This entrance into the world of the gods, like Perseus’s and Theseus’s own exploits in *Pythian* 10 and Bacchylides 17, gives the Argonauts, and Jason in particular, access to special knowledge.

This special knowledge comes in the form of revelations from Aphrodite and Medea, which allow Jason to accomplish his exploits. Aphrodite teaches (ἐκδιδάσκησεν, line 217) Jason charms to make Medea fall in love with him. In turn, Medea shows (δείκνυεν, line 220) Jason how to triumph over the impossible tasks set by Aeetes. Jason undertakes the labor confidently, trusting in the divine help he has received (θεῷ πίσυρος “trusting in the divinity,” line 232). Thus, according to Pindar, Jason’s exploits show that he enjoys divine favor, as the gods—Medea is called immortal by Pindar at line 11—help him

achieve other wise impossible tasks.

Aeetes is surprised at Jason's prowess (ἀγασθεῖς, line 238), which recalls Minos's surprise at Theseus's boldness and Pelias surprise at Jason's arrival. In all cases, the older men's surprise is the sign that they have been vanquished by fate and must concede victory. Aeetes therefore indicates the location of the Golden Fleece to Jason, who conquers it after killing the dragon that guards it. Finally, Jason steals (κλέψεν, line 250) Medea with her own consent and sails out on the eastern Ocean, through which he rejoins the Red Sea.

The Argonauts' return to Greece on the circular river Ocean is the occasion for Pindar to return to his original topic, the dynasty of the Euphemids. Pindar recounts Euphemus's union with one of the Lemnian women, which gives rise to Arcesilaus's family (line 256). As Segal notes, the alternation between land and sea in the episode is a way for Pindar to tie the Argonautic myth with the foundation of Cyrene: "In both stories Greek heroes venture over barbarian seas to establish, or re-establish, possession of a Hellenic city or land."¹⁰² In Segal's view, the narrative of Jason's taking the throne of Iolcos by sailing to Colchis mirrors the story of the colonization of Cyrene. Furthermore, the imagery of land and sea ties the two myths with the most pressing issue at hand in the ode, namely the current political troubles at Cyrene. Indeed, Pindar's final nautical metaphor describes Demophilus's and Cyrene's past troubles and his hope for the future: ἐν δὲ χρόνῳ μεταβολαὶ λήξαντος οὐρου ιστίων (But in time, as the wind abates, the sails are changed, lines 291–93). According to Pindar, Demophilus will reach land after wandering a sea of troubles, and so will Cyrene.¹⁰³ The ode thus comes full circle and closes its narrative of three parallel stories, the Argonautic myth, the foundation of Cyrene, and the reestablishment of political stability by Arcesilaus. In all three, the sea is a dividing and a connecting factor. In the Argonautic myth, the sea separates Greece from barbarian lands, but it is also path toward the other world, inhabited by the dead and the gods. Crossing the Ocean allows Jason to enter in contact with the gods and assert his heroic status and kingship in Iolcos. In the foundation myth of Cyrene, the sea represents the difficult and dangerous space in which the colonists risk their life in order to create a new city and civilize Libya. While the colonists are at sea, they have no home and no attachments. Landing in Libya symbolizes the start of a new community and gives the colonists a new status. Finally, in describing Arcesilaus's political difficulties, the sea is a metaphor for the stormy conditions that prevailed among the Cyrenean aristocracy at the time of the performance of the ode. The three parallel stories are thus linked by their actors, Arcesilaus and his Argonaut ancestors, and by the movement across the sea that forms their main plot. In all cases, the attainment of political objectives is represented as a sea crossing.

Conclusion

Each of the odes studied in this chapter presents a moment of indetermination that is resolved by a bold and successful sea crossing. Perseus, Theseus, and Jason prove themselves as heroes and political leaders through their journeys across the sea and pave the way for future political leadership in Thessaly, Athens, and Cyrene. Within the cities of performance of the odes, social and political moments of tension are resolved by sea crossings, as the Thessalian dynasty experiences the satisfaction of seeing its excellence cross the sea of life, as the Athenians navigate the dangerous waters of political hegemony over allied cities, and as the Cyrenean king manages to traverse the troubled seas of dissent. Just as the sea determines the place of political entities by forming a geographical barrier, it also defines the place of individuals and communities in the

geographies of the mind.

In all these contexts, crossing the sea is presented as a daring enterprise undertaken by a male protagonist. While some of them are youths in the process of coming-of-age and others are older men, they all have political concerns in common. All of them, heroes and mortals, aim to take or keep political leadership and prove their inborn excellence. A sea voyage is a particularly appropriate image to convey the difficulty of the enterprise, the steadfastness required of the sailor, as well as the change effected at the end of the journey. Just like a ship crosses the sea to new shores, political leaders bring their cities to new situations and open new possibilities. Political change, like a sea crossing, is a transcendent experience. In mythical terms, the sea brings heroes across the boundaries of the cosmos, to come into contact with the gods and the dead. In the human realm, the sea offers a pathway to new territories and is therefore a metaphor for the attainment of a new status or a new order within the community.

The Greek mind-set about such transformations is well expressed in the *Theogony* 337–48, where the children of Oceanus—the Rivers and the Oceanids—are tasked with the fostering of men:

Τηθὺς δ' Ὀκεανῷ Ποταμοὺς τέκε δινήεντας,

...

τίκτε δὲ θυγατέρων ἱερὸν γένος, αἷ' κατὰ γαῖαν
ἄνδρας κουρίζουσι σὺν Ἀπόλλωνι ἄνακτι
καὶ Ποταμοῖς, ταύτην δὲ Διὸς πάρα μοῖραν ἔχουσι

Tethys bore the whirling rivers to Oceanus.... She also gave birth to a holy family of daughters who nurture men under the earth with Lord Apollo and the Rivers, for this is the task that Zeus appointed for them.

Along with Apollo, the god of *kouroi* “young men,” the children of the Ocean operate the passage of youths to adulthood. Accordingly, it was a common Greek custom for youths to dedicate their hair to rivers upon coming-of-age,¹⁰⁴ or to offer it to Apollo.¹⁰⁵ Thus, crossing the Ocean, the sea, or a river—or symbolically drowning into it as the hair sinks down—represents the risky but necessary passage of youths to a new phase of their lives in which they acquire political and social leadership. We note that in the *Theogony*, this process is accomplished under the earth (κατὰ γαῖαν). This location underscores the pervasive nature of the hydrological network in Greek mythology, which was imagined to run from the Ocean to the river Styx in the Underworld, and finally to the surface through rivers and springs. Furthermore, the maturation of youths “under the earth” emphasizes their experience of a symbolic death during their transition.¹⁰⁶ In myths, young heroes such as Perseus, Theseus, and Jason face death beyond the sea. In the metaphorical terms of cult practice, youths perform rites that symbolize such an experience and the renewal that follows.¹⁰⁷

Indeed, the extreme experiences of youths and “sailors” are followed by a reestablishment of order. Hesychius glosses the verb κουρίζω, found in our passage of the *Theogony*, as ὑμεναίουσθαι “to sing the wedding-song.” Hesychius thereby indicates that passing from the state of youth to that of adult signifies the establishment of a household through marriage. As we have seen, the young heroes in our odes, both the semidivine ones and the human victor Hippocleas, all become attractive to the other sex, thus prefiguring their upcoming marriage. The same principles apply to the sea crossings accomplished by older men in our odes. Indeed, established leaders cross political seas by keeping social concord, and therefore they are the keepers of the communal household or *oikos*, namely the city. In *Pythian* 4, Euphemus, his descendant Battus, and their further descendants the Euphemids, all found households that ultimately grow into the

flourishing city of Cyrene.¹⁰⁸

It remains to be noted that no heroine undertakes such a journey across the sea or the Ocean of her own accord—except for Medea, who is said by Pindar to be an immortal goddess. In fact, Medea's pre sen ta tion in the myth has long been recognized as "masculine," since she takes an active role unlike other Greek heroines.¹⁰⁹ This sharp divide between genders reflects Greek social norms and expectations. On the one hand, sailing to the farthest reaches of the Ocean or diving to the bottom of the sea is a self-defining and empowering action. On the other hand, females were expected to remain passive throughout their lives, especially at their most crucial socially defining moment, namely marriage.¹¹⁰ For this reason, only males—and Medea—are depicted as taking their destiny in their own hands as they sail for the horizon.

CHAPTER 3

prophecy.

The myth emphasizes the tension between the patrilineal succession that was customary in Greek society and the problematic situation caused by a sole female heir. Acrisius attempts to conform to patriarchal norms by trying to generate a male heir. Although grandsons usually inherited from their maternal grandfathers in the absence of a male heir, direct male lines were generally preferred.³ For this reason, some of the renditions of the myth of Danae have her deflowered by her uncle Proetus instead of Zeus.⁴ In addition to rationalizing Zeus's divine intervention, these versions present a succession scheme that keeps Acrisius's inheritance within his own line.⁵ In the other versions of the myth, the oracle rendered by the Pythia makes it clear that Perseus's succession to the throne of Argos is inevitable. Similarly, Zeus's intervention in impregnating Danae shows that the fate announced by the oracle is inescapable and that Acrisius is powerless to avoid it, because it is the natural order that younger generations replace older ones. Acrisius's treatment of Danae is therefore a futile rebellion against divine pronouncements that ultimately seals the king's fate when Perseus unwittingly kills his grand father.

Acrisius not only fails to recognize the inevitability of the succession of generations, but also fails in his duties to protect Danae and recognize Perseus's right to the throne.⁶ Pherecydes recounts that once Perseus is born and has lived in the underground chamber with his mother and a nurse for a few years, Acrisius hears him play and becomes furious. He drags Danae to the altar of Zeus Herkeios and asks her who fathered her baby. When Danae responds that it was Zeus, Acrisius refuses to believe her.⁷ It is significant that the scene takes place at the altar of Zeus Herkeios. As Karamanou observes, Zeus Herkeios rules over oaths and his cult protects blood ties and the family. Zeus Herkeios thus rules over the framework in which a man, as head of the house hold, exercises authority. Karamanou writes, "Acrisius thus binds Danae to reveal the truth by appealing to their kinship and his own power over his daughter."⁸ By refusing to believe Danae's story and to recognize Perseus, Acrisius disrespects not only Zeus, but also his own status and authority as head of the *oikos* or house hold. Thus, Acrisius crosses the natural and divine laws that govern the family: he refuses to let his daughter marry so as not to cede the throne to his heir, and he still refuses to yield even when his heir is born by divine action despite all his precautions.⁹ Acrisius ignores all portents of divine truth and blindly commits injustice, when he is responsible for administering justice within his family.¹⁰

Despite being denied marriage by her father, Danae becomes a mother. However, she gives birth to Perseus as an unmarried woman and therefore remains a *parthenos*. Giulia Sissa writes, "Making love outside the marriage bed, before a marriage has taken place in front of witnesses at the 'nymphic table,' did not result in any change in the name by which a young girl was called. She became a woman (*gynê*) only in matrimony, as the *gynê* of her husband."¹¹ Thus the birth of Perseus outside of a ritually and socially sanctioned union does not advance Danae's status from *parthenos* to *gynê*. For such a change to take place, the child must be recognized as legitimate.¹² As a result, Acrisius is still Danae's *kyrios*, or responsible male relative.¹³ This lack of a status is never set right for Danae, who never marries and, instead of passing under the *kyria* of a husband, remains with her son once he becomes king.¹⁴

One tradition resolves the problem of Danae's status. According to Hyginus *Fabulae* 63, Polydectes marries Danae upon her arrival on Seriphos and raises Perseus in the temple of Minerva.¹⁵ In this iteration of the myth, Polydectes is not a villain, but rather a legitimate husband who provides an honorable status for Danae. When Acrisius learns of his daughter's and grandson's whereabouts, he sails to Seriphos to claim them. Acrisius and Perseus are reconciled thanks to Polydectes' intercession and Perseus promises never

to kill his grandfather. However, when Acrisius is prevented from returning to Argos by a storm, Polydectes happens to die. At the funeral games held in honor of Polydectes, Perseus throws the discus and the wind makes it deviate so that it kills Acrisius. Hyginus notes that the event was divinely ordained (*deorum factum est*). Thus, for Hyginus as for other earlier writers, the myth of Danae is centered on the succession of generations and the inescapability of fate. In fact, Hyginus writes that after the burial of Acrisius, Perseus goes to Argos to claim his ancestral kingdom (*regnaque avita possedit*) and therefore accomplishes the fate Acrisius was so desperately trying to avoid.¹⁶

Another late tradition has Danae leave Greece altogether to gain a social status. In this version, Danae founds the Italian city of Ardea with king Pilemnus, with whom she gets married.¹⁷ Karamanou suggests that the traditionalist trends of the Augustan period and Vergil's own literary goals helped shape this account of the myth, in which an Italian city finds grand mythical origins by having famous Greek founders.¹⁸ Furthermore, this tradition gives the myth a satisfactory ending in which Danae finds a stable home and husband. Crossing the sea to found a new city in a new country symbolizes the transition to an entirely new *oikos*, far away from Argos and Acrisius, with whom ties are completely cut. This ending brings the narrative full circle by correcting the initial injustice committed by Acrisius in the myth, which was to try to avoid the natural process of the succession of generations by denying his daughter marriage, husband, and *oikos*.

Danae's Ambiguous Status

Throughout her life, Danae's ambiguous status is the cause for tribulation. She is female, yet the sole heir to her father's estate; she is nubile, yet prevented to marry; she is a parthenos, yet a mother. All these contradictions place Danae on the margins of society and prevent her from integrating a traditional social role. To emphasize this intermediary status, the myth places Danae in ambiguous, paradoxical situations where she is stuck in between life and death.

Danae's underground chamber is the first of these intermediary stations.¹⁹ Danae is entombed alive, but given a provision of food and a nurse so as to avoid the pollution of murder. She is a live and nubile girl who is condemned to die and marry Hades in the Underworld and be sterile forever. For this reason, Sophocles *Antigone* 946–47 uses the expression ἐν τυμβήρει θαλάμῳ κατεζεύχθη “she was imprisoned in a tomb-like bridal chamber” to describe Danae's confinement.²⁰ Sophocles thus emphasizes the paradox of Danae's forced sterility, while she is at the age where she should be having children.

However, Danae's tomb quickly becomes a *thalamos*, a bridal chamber, as Zeus enters in the shape of a golden rain and impregnates Danae. The image of rain is important, as it recalls the water of a nuptial bath, said to bestow fertility upon brides. According to Marchetti and Kolokotsas, this aspect of the underground chamber in the myth of Danae recalls the function of Nymphaia, sacred caves (or above-ground cave-like structures) of the Nymphs, which always included a source of running water.²¹ The Nymphs represent female sexuality (the word *nymphê* means “bride”) and they protect marriage and children.²² For this reason, Nymphaia were often used to perform fertility and purification rites before and after weddings as well as before and after births.²³ Thus, Zeus's encounter with Danae in the underground chamber replaces the image of the tomb with that of a bridal chamber. Zeus's water brings fertility to the underground, which after all holds the generative potential of the earth and can be seen to represent a womb.

Perhaps for this reason, the sexual character of the encounter between Zeus and Danae is emphasized in our sources. In the *Iliad* 14.319, Zeus mentions Danae in an

enumeration of the times when he was overcome by love (ἔρως). The sexual aspect of the story is also well represented by Attic vase painters who, throughout the fifth and fourth centuries, depict the myth with increasingly explicit sexual overtones, especially the golden rain (Fig. 9).²⁴ In fact, water is an important symbol of sexuality for girls of marriageable age. As Pfisterer-Haas has demonstrated, in mythology and in Athenian iconography, fountains, rivers, and fountain houses are important places where *parthenoi* encounter men.²⁵ Such events, whether the encounter is planned between two lovers or unplanned and results in rape, are represented in sexual terms by literary and figurative sources, as in the famous case of Nausicaa and Odysseus, for instance.²⁶ Thus, the power of life, represented by Zeus in the shape of fertilizing rain, overcomes the forced virginity imposed on Danae by her father Acrisius.

This encounter with a god transforms Danae's destiny. In historical times, Danae's status was elevated because of her intercourse with Zeus. Pindar *Nemean* 10.10–12 asserts that Zeus's love for Danae is a subject of glory for Argos. Pindar uses the verb ἀριστεύει, which conveys the idea of "being the best," being the first in the social order. Danae was also remembered and perhaps even worshipped at her thalamos in Argos (Paus. 2.23.7). The emphasis placed on the thalamos signals that Danae's intercourse with Zeus was considered to be her defining narrative, like other heroines who were remembered at their *thalamoi* such as Harmonia and Semele (9.12.3), and Alcmene (9.11.1).²⁷ Thus, Danae's contact with Zeus and the subsequent birth of Perseus distinguishes Danae as a woman of importance. However, in the myth, Danae's contact with Zeus does not afford her a special status. She remains isolated and vulnerable, much in the way any castaway woman would be in Greek society.



Figure 9. Boeotian red-figure bell krater, ca. 450–425 BC. Paris, Louvre, CA 925. Photo: © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.

In fact, Danae is exposed at sea in a chest,²⁸ another procedure that leaves her in between life and death. As we have seen in [Chapter 1](#), the sea is an intermediary space between life and death. Danae is thus cast away to either drown or float to safety in a distant land. Furthermore, the chest is an ambiguous receptacle. In everyday life, chests (*larnakes*) were generally used to keep food, clothing, and valuables. However, they were also frequently used as coffins, cinerary urns, or vessels to expose children, along with other containers such as *aggoi*, *kalpidai*, *teuchê*, *chytrai*, *skaphai*, and *ostraka*.²⁹ Pierre Brulé has stressed the ambiguity of these containers: they are essential to life, because they keep food and clothing, but they also evoke death, because they can be used as coffins and cinerary urns.³⁰ In Danae's case, the exposure in the chest is another way to kill without incurring the pollution of murder, a doublet of her ineffective imprisonment in the underground chamber.³¹

The image of the *larnax* floating on the sea also recalls the sea voyage to the afterlife in Charon's skiff or in other boats.³² On a red-figure Attic lekythos, Danae and the little Perseus are shown floating in a chest with seabirds flying above them ([Fig. 10](#)).³³ The seabirds stress the connection of the chest scene with death, because flocks of flying birds are a common feature of funerary iconography.³⁴ As Vermeule has pointed out, these birds may represent the voyage of the soul away from the earth.³⁵ In addition, Junker has shown that a pelike representing the exposure of Danae and Perseus was intended as a

funerary vessel.³⁶ Thus, Danae, after being brought out from her underground prison, finds herself again in an intermediate location between life and death. Her complete helplessness, shut in a coffin that cannot be steered, underscores her lack of connection with a family, oikos, or community. She is completely alone and passive, lost in the immensity of the sea.

However, in typical mythical fashion, exposure provides the victim with a hope of survival that is always realized. Indeed, Danae and Perseus ultimately land in Seriphos. By hiding and protecting its inmates, the chest carries with it the idea of a wonderful and unexpected renewal, a second chance given by the gods. Similarly, in a well-known Greek myth, Deucalion and Pyrrha save themselves and all future humanity from a catastrophic flood by hiding in a chest and floating to safety.³⁷ For this reason, Brulé has insisted on the renewal operated by the chest on mythical characters, noting that the passage in the larnax marks the beginning of a new life in a new country.³⁸ Such is the case with Thoas, the mythical king of Lemnos. According to Apollonius Rhodius, Thoas escaped the maddened Lemnian women by being hidden in a chest by his daughter Hypsipyle. He floated on the sea in the chest and was rescued by fishermen who brought him to shore on an island (Fig. 11).³⁹ There, Thoas consorted with the local nymph and fathered the hero Sikinos, who eventually gave his name to the island. In this case, Thoas's flight in the chest allows not only his survival, but the establishment of a whole new community through his son Sikinos. However, in another version of the story, Thoas is hidden in a chest by Hypsipyle, but the chest is cast into the sea by the Lemnian women and the king dies.⁴⁰ These two versions of the story show the ambiguity of being shut alive in a box: the inmate is intended to be either saved or killed, and likewise, the result can be either life or death.⁴¹



Figure 10. Attic red-figure lekythos, ca. 480 BC. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, 25.084, Providence, Museum Appropriation Fund and Special Gift Fund.

Similarly, Pausanias 3.24.3 recounts that according to a tale told in Brasiae, Semele was cast in a chest by Cadmus when he found out that she was pregnant. The currents pushed Semele and the little Dionysus to the Laconian coast near the town of Brasiae. When the chest was opened, Semele was dead, but her son Dionysus was alive and he was reared by the inhabitants of the town. Just as in the story of Thoas, life and death coexist in this narrative and the chest is the instrument of both. Dionysus, as the

immortal son of a dead woman, is an appropriate figure to illustrate such a paradox.⁴²



Figure 11. Athenian red-figure cup from Chiusi, ca. 470 BC. Berlin, Antikensammlung, F2300, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin-Preussischer Kulturbesitz.

The ambiguity of the chest as an instrument of passage between life and death is also evident in the story of Cleomedes of Astypalaia (Paus. 6.9.6–7). Cleomedes was denied victory at the Olympic Games because he killed his opponent. Maddened by resentment, Cleomedes returned to Astypalaia and killed sixty boys by destroying the school in which they stood. Stoned by an angry mob, Cleomedes ran to the sanctuary of Athena and hid in a chest. When it was opened, the chest contained nothing at all and Cleomedes had disappeared. Questioned on the occurrence, the Pythia answered that Cleomedes had joined the heroes in their immortal life and should be worshipped as the last one of them. In this case, Cleomedes is saved from death at the hands of the mob, but has to leave earth altogether, and the chest is the locus of his transition between mortal and immortal life.

A final parallel appears in Lycus *FGrH* 570F7, in which the historian reports that there is a mountain named Thalamos in Thouriae beneath which is a cave of the nymphs. According to Lycus, a local shepherd used to graze his master's flocks there and to offer sacrifice to the Nymphs in their cave (the text calls the divinities Nymphs and Muses interchangeably).⁴³ The shepherd's master became angry because of the frequency of the sacrifices. He shut the shepherd in a chest, claiming that he would see if the goddesses would save their worshipper. After two months, he reopened the chest and found the man alive and the chest filled with honeycombs. Thus, the shepherd survives his apparent condemnation to death, and his passage in the chest distinguishes him as a favorite of the Nymphs.⁴⁴

Overall, chests are ambiguous symbols of life and death because they can be coffins as

well as life-savers. Being shut in a chest suggests death, but in Greek myth it also marks the beginning of a new life. However, is this true in the case of Danae? After surviving imprisonment in an underground chamber that turns out to be a nuptial chamber, Danae floats away from Argos in a chest that is intended to kill her and her child, but nonetheless brings them safely to Seriphos. Danae's survival is certainly a testament of divine favor and a sign of the justice of her claims against those of Acrisius,⁴⁵ but is this landing really the start of a new and better life for Danae?

Danae's Failed Marriage—Landing on Seriphos

Throughout the myth, Danae struggles because she has an ambiguous status with respect to her family. She is a female heir, a parthenos prevented from moving to the status of gynê, and an unmarried mother. Only one action could possibly resolve the situation in accordance with Greek standards: the celebration of a proper marriage and the adoption of Perseus. After Danae's final separation from Acrisius, effected by her passage at sea, such a resolution would be expected but never takes place. Nonetheless, Danae's landing in Seriphos is consistently cast as a union to a man, Polydectes, the king of the island. The union is described not as marriage, but rather as a dominating and degrading sexual relationship. Pindar *Pythian* 12.14–15 describes the relationship in the following terms:

λυγρόν τ' ἔρανον Πολυδέκτα θῆκε ματρός τ' ἔμπεδον
δουλοσύναν τό τ' ἀναγκάιον λέχος

And he [Perseus] repaid Polydectes a terrible price for his mother's long servitude and her bed of slavery

Similarly, in fr. 70d, 41–42 Snell-Maehler, Pindar refers to the petrification of Polydectes as a punishment for his sexual pursuit of Danae:

πέτραι δ' [ἔφ]α[ν]θεν ἀντ[ί] φωτῶν
...]γτ' ἔρωτος ἀνταμοιβὰν ἐδάσσατο⁴⁶

They seemed to be stones instead of men ... he distributed as a requital for lust

According to Pindar, Polydectes did not marry Danae, but rather forced her to become his enslaved concubine, a dreadful alternative to marriage for a Greek girl of aristocratic birth.⁴⁷

Aeschylus, in the fragments of the *Net-Haulers* (fr. 46a–47a Radt), also describes Danae's landing on Seriphos as the start of a sexual relationship. In fact, part of the plot of this satyr play revolved around the “wedding” procedures between Danae and Silenus.⁴⁸ Replacing a proper groom with the sexually overactive Satyr makes the nature of the relationship blatantly clear. In particular, fragment 47a 821–32 (Radt) speaks to the sexual availability of Danae in unequivocal terms:

ἀλλ' εἴα, φίλοι, στείχωμεν ὅπως [γ]άμον ὁρμαίνωμεν,
ἐπεὶ τέλεος [κ]αιρὸς ἀναυδος τάδ' ἐπαινεῖ.
καὶ τήνδ' [ἐ]σορῶ νύμφην ἥ[δ]η καὶ πάνυ βου-
λομένην τῆς ἡμετέρας φιλόκτητος ἄδην κορέσασθαι.
καὶ θαῦμ' οὐδέν. πολλὺς ἦν ἀπ'τῇ χρόνος, ὃν χίρρα
κατὰ ναῦν ὕφαλος τείρετο· νῦν δ' οὖν [ἐ]σορ]ῶσ'
ἦβην τὴν ἡμετέραν [γ]ηθ]εῖ γάνυται νυμφίον [ο]ἶον

[δαι]σιν λαμπραῖς τῆς Α[φ]ροδείτης

But let's go, my friends, so that we can get on with the wedding, since the time is ripe and silently approves; and I see that the bride is fully willing to gorge on our loving. And this is no surprise. She had to go without it for a long time, pining in her chest under the water. Now, she sees our youth and she rejoices in marrying such a groom, endowed with the charms of Aphrodite.

The words γάμον, νύμφην, and νυμφίον make it clear that the satyrs are parodying a real marriage. However, Sommerstein notes, "The satyrs are apparently assuming that Danae, although 'married' to Silenus, will be sexually available to all of them."⁴⁹ Thus, the satyr play stresses the failure of Danae's marriage by suggesting that instead of observing the chastity usually expected of a Greek wife, Danae is longing to have intercourse with a multitude of sexually overactive individuals, including her "husband." In this way, Aeschylus satirizes Danae's relationship with Polydectes, which is prompted by sexual desire and made possible by Danae's vulnerable situation. Because Danae is no one's bride, she is everyone's.

The scene of Danae's emergence from the sea in Seriphos in Aeschylus's satyr play can also be understood as a parody of Aphrodite's emergence from the sea after her birth. However, instead of a powerful goddess who masters love and desire and uses these emotions as weapons, Danae is a helpless mortal who is subjected to sexual pursuit. In fact, several fragments of Euripides' *Dictys* and *Danae* describe actions undertaken under Aphrodite's sway as rash, violent, and all-powerful.⁵⁰ The fragment of the *Net-Haulers* quoted above also ends on a reference to Aphrodite. Taken together, these allusions indicate that Euripides and Aeschylus felt that Aphrodite and the power of desire were important themes of the story of Danae. From her intercourse with Zeus in the thalamos to the sexual compulsion imposed on her by Polydectes, and to the parodic representation of her plight by Aeschylus, Danae is constantly pursued by male sexual desire that subverts the experience of marriage that a Greek bride of high birth should normally have expected.

The failure of Danae's marriage was further satirized by Roman poets, who mockingly suggest that Zeus's golden rain was payment for Danae's virginity.⁵¹ For instance, in *Odes* 3.16.5–8, Horace writes,

si non Acrisium, uirginis abditae
custodem pauidum, Iuppiter et Venus
risissent: fore enim tutum iter et patens
conuerso in pretium deo.

... if Jupiter and Venus had not mocked Acrisius, the fearful guardian of the confined maiden: indeed, the way was to be safe and wide-open once the god turned himself into money.

Horace jokes that gold opens every door, no matter how closely guarded it may be. In this perspective, the subsequent struggles of Perseus in establishing his legitimacy take a different meaning, as he may, to a Roman audience, have needed to clear the suspicion that his mother was a prostitute. Alternatively, Roman audiences may have understood the myth of Danae and Perseus as similar to that of Romulus and Remus, who are nursed by an ambiguous *lupa*, a she-wolf or prostitute (Livy 1.4). The story of Tarpeia may also have been present to the mind of a Roman audience, since the maiden was said to have sold the city for golden jewelry.⁵²

Danae's conflicted relationship to gold certainly stems from the shape Zeus takes to

visit her, the golden rain. As early as Euripides, the power of gold was associated with the myth, and numerous fragments of Euripides' *Danae* and *Dictys* contrast the attraction of gold with nobility of character.⁵³ In *Danae* fr. 324 Nauck, the speaker even extols the virtues of gold above the blessings of having a family:

ὦ χρυσέ, δεξιῶμα κάλλιστον βροτοῖς,
ὥς οὔτε μήτηρ ἡδονὰς τοίας ἔχει,
οὐ παῖδες ἀνθρώποισιν, οὐ φίλος πατήρ,
οἷας σὺ χοί σέ δώμασιν κεκτημένοι.
εἰ δ' ἡ Κύπρις τοιοῦτον ὀφθαλμοῖς ὄρᾳ,
οὐ θαῦμ' ἔρωτας μυρίου ἀυτὴν τρέφειν.

Gold, you are the most beautiful possession of mortals; neither mother, nor children, nor a dear father can bring to men the happiness you procure to the man who has you in his house. If Cypris stares with such a glance, it is no wonder that she fuels such passions.

According to Seneca (*Letters* 115.14), who attributes the lines to Euripides' *Bellerophon*, these verses were so outrageous that the Athenian spectators of the play rose to expel the actors, until Euripides was able to convince them to wait and see how this admirer of gold (*admirator auri*) would fare. Still according to Seneca, [Bellerophon] received the punishment that is usual in these cases (*poenas, quas in sua quisque dat*). Perhaps Euripides' lines were the origin of the Roman treatment of the story of Danae, in which the girl's sufferings are interpreted as a punishment for her venal character.

Ancient Comparanda to the Myth of Danae: Failed Marriages

The evolution of the ancient interpretations of Danae's character prompted her association with a variety of heroines through the centuries. In the Classical period, Sophocles *Antigone* 944–54 draws a comparison between his heroine and the Argive princess, clearly interpreting Danae as a tragic figure:

ἔτλα καὶ Δανάας οὐράνιον φῶς
ἀλλάξαι δέμας ἐν χαλκοδέτοις αὐλαῖς.
κρυπτομένα δ' ἐν τυμβή-
ρει θαλάμῳ κατεζεύχθη.
καίτοι καὶ γενεᾷ τίμιος, ὦ παῖ παῖ,
καὶ Ζηνὸς ταμιεύεσκε γονὰς χρυσορύτους.
ἀλλ' ἅ μοιριδία τις δύναισι δεινά.
οὔτ' ἂν νιν ὄλβος οὔτ' Ἄρης,
οὐ πύργος, οὐχ ἀλίκτυποι
κελαινὰ νᾶες ἐκφύγοιεν.

So too Danae endured to lose the sight of heavenly light in her bronze chamber, and she was hidden, confined to a bridal tomb; and yet she was of high birth, my child, and she was the guardian of Zeus's golden-flowing offspring. But the power of fate is a terrible thing, and neither wealth, nor war, nor tower, nor sea-beaten black ships could escape it.

Like Danae, Antigone is immured in a tomb while she is still alive and provided with food as a means to kill her without incurring pollution.⁵⁴ The characterization ἐν τυμβήρει

θαλάμῳ expresses the ambiguous station of both heroines and the fact that they are brides of Hades.⁵⁵ In both cases, the girls must abandon the light of day (οὐράνιον φῶς ἀλλάξει δέμας)⁵⁶ and suffer a harsh treatment despite their nobility (καίτοι καὶ γενεᾷ τίμιος).⁵⁷

In the strophe, Sophocles makes it clear that fate is all-powerful, and neither Danae nor Antigone could possibly resist it, when wealth, martial valor, and towers are useless against it. The idea that fate cannot be avoided speaks to the parallel conflicts that reside at the core of the myths of Danae and Antigone. Danae's fate is to suffer at the hands of Acrisius, but it is also fated that the little Perseus be born and that one generation succeeds another, no matter how hard Acrisius may try to prevent it. Similarly, it is fated that Antigone dies unmarried in the cave, but the divine laws that govern family ties and the rites of burial are equally fated, and disrespecting them eventually proves to be Creon's undoing. Thus, both myths use ambiguous locations, tombs in which live girls are unjustly immured, to demonstrate the ambiguity of fate and human conflict.

Another important fifth-century comparison between Danae and other heroines is found on a curious Athenian vase known as the Heroines Pyxis (Fig. 12).⁵⁸ On the vase, six women (five of whom are identified by inscriptions) are depicted performing daily womanly tasks in pairs. Helen sits roving wool and Clytemnestra brings her an alabastron, while an unnamed woman brings a basket to Cassandra. Finally, Iphigeneia ties her hair in a doorway while Danae brings her a chest out of which she pulls a necklace.

Since none of these heroines appear together in any myth and it is therefore impossible to interpret the image in a unified narrative, Mangieri proposes that the vase prompts the viewer to compare and contrast the heroines, much as catalogue poetry such as the Hesiodic *Ehoiai* does.⁵⁹ Thus, according to Mangieri, Clytemnestra and Helen are paired as two sisters who married two brothers, and who, according to Stesichorus fr. 46 Page, were both cursed by Aphrodite because of their father's disrespect for the goddess to be "twice-wed and thrice-wed and husband deserters." They represent undesirable wives. Iphigeneia and Danae are paired because they are destined to be brides in death and are both linked to the sea. They are innocent maidens whose lives are threatened. The third pairing is unfortunately difficult to read securely due to the absence of an inscription to identify the basket-bearing woman who walks toward Cassandra.

Mangieri further suggests that all the women represented on the pyxis are connected together and proposes that Clytemnestra is connected to Helen and Iphigeneia by kinship and to Cassandra by jealousy, and he stresses that the Trojan War looms in the background of all the stories (except Danae's). Mangieri also suggests that Helen can be contrasted with Iphigeneia as the one for whom blood is shed in the Trojan War, while Iphigeneia sheds her own blood for the war. On the iconographical level, the scene is unified by wool working, starting with Helen's roving and ending with Iphigeneia tying a finished textile around her hair.⁶⁰



Figure 12. Athenian pyxis, fifth century BC. London, British Museum, 1873, 0111.7. Photo: © The

Mangieri is right to point out that the vase is intended to prompt comparisons and contrasts between the heroines. In fact, the most important point of comparison and contrast between the five heroines named on the vase is marriage. Danae is similar to Iphigeneia, since they are both innocent and both destined to be brides of Hades. Both of their marriages fail, since Iphigeneia's betrothal to Achilles is only a deceitful pretense and Danae never gets properly married. Both of their failed marriages also happen in conjunction with a sea crossing. As for Helen and Clytemnestra, they both break their marriages by deserting their husbands. Finally, Cassandra refuses Apollo's love only to end up as Agamemnon's doomed concubine. In this perspective, the heroines' wool working takes all its significance. As the quintessential activity of the married woman,⁶¹ wool working is appropriate to prompt reflection on heroines who struggled with matrimony.

On the Heroines Pyxis and in Sophocles' comparison between Danae and Antigone, Danae is presented as an innocent victim. However, in the Hellenistic period, Apollonius Rhodius associates Danae with heroines who brought their troubles upon themselves by having an affair before marriage. When the Argonauts arrive at Drepane after their flight from Colchis, Arete, the wife of Alcinous, takes pity on Medea and persuades her husband to protect her. In an impassioned speech, Arete compares the plight of Medea with that of Antiope, Danae, and Metope:

τῷ φίλῃ μήτ' οὖν αὐτὸς ἐκὼν ἐπίορκον ὁμόσσαί
 θείης Αἰσονίδην, μήτ' ἄσχετα σείο ἔκητι
 παῖδα πατήρ θυμῷ κεκοτηότι δηλήσαιο.
 λίην γὰρ δύσζηλοι ἑαῖς ἐπὶ παισὶ τοκῆς·
 οἷα μὲν Ἀντιόπην εὐώπιδα μήσατο Νυκτεύς,
 οἷα δὲ καὶ Δανάη πόντῳ ἔνι πῆματ' ἀνέτλη
 πατὴρ ἀτασθαλίῃσι· νέον γε μὲν οὐδ' ἀποτηλοῦ
 ὕβριστης ἔχετος γλήναις ἐνὶ χάλκεα κέντρα
 πῆξε θυγατρὸς ἑῆς, στονόεντι δὲ κάρφεται οἴτῳ,
 ὀρφναίῃ ἐνὶ χαλκὸν ἀλετρεύουσα καλιῇ. (Ap. Rhod. Arg. 4.1086–95)

My dear, do not willingly condemn the son of Aeson to perjure himself, and do not let the father, on your account, rage uncontrolled against his child in his anger. Indeed, fathers are overjealous about their children; Nykteus contrived such things against the beautiful Antiope, and Danae suffered such ills at sea for her father's wickedness! And recently, not far away, Echetus drove bronze spikes in his daughter's eyes, and she withers away by a terrible fate, grinding bronze grain in a dark barn.

Arete compares Medea to girls who suffer harsh punishments at the hands of their fathers for having relationships out of wedlock. The story of Antiope was well known starting at least in the fifth century, although her sons Amphion and Zethus appear in Greek literature as early as the *Odyssey*.⁶² Our sources give various versions of Antiope's adventures, in which she is either raped by Zeus as a parthenos or as a married woman. In one version (Hyginus *Fab.* 7, apparently from a Euripidean tragedy), she is raped by Zeus after having an affair and being cast out by her husband. In all cases, Antiope suffers harsh treatments at the hands of her father, her husband, and her husband's second wife Dirce. As for Metope, she is blinded by her father Echetus, king of Epirus, for having intercourse with a lover.⁶³ Echetus then locks his daughter in a barn and tells her that she will regain her sight once she grinds bronze grains into flour. Echetus, who was

famous in Greek mythology for his extreme cruelty, was also said to have maimed and castrated Metope's lover Aechmodicus. This story first appears in Apollodorus, but may have been known earlier, since Echetus's cruelty and habit of maiming enemies are referenced in the *Odyssey*. Overall, the stories of Antiope and Metope convey the idea of a girl willingly giving herself to a lover (in particular if Apollonius has the Euripidean version of the story of Antiope in mind). This suggests that for Apollonius, Danae too surrendered her virginity willingly, thereby prompting her father's vengeance. The parallel with Medea then becomes evident: just like all these young women, the Colchian witch betrayed her father for the love of a stranger.

Yet, in an effort to excuse this outrageous behavior and to save Medea from Aeetes, Arete says (4.1080–81), *ἄασθη, ὅτε πρῶτα βοῶν θελκτῆρια δῶκεν φάρμακά οἱ* “she was under the sway of infatuation when she first gave him charms to subdue the oxen.” Apollonius portrays the tender-hearted Arete as trying to convince her husband that girls act foolishly when in love (cf. Apollonius's depiction of Aphrodite's intervention in the relationship between Medea and Jason) and that they should be protected from their fathers' excessive reactions. Alcinous is persuaded by these arguments, and he tells Arete that he will not surrender Medea to the Colchians provided she has already consummated her union with Jason. That same night, Arete warns the Argonauts and Medea and Jason's nuptials take place. Thus, the well-meaning but ultimately misguided queen contrives to save Medea. This innocent scheming offers a stark counterpart to Medea's own noxious stratagems and prefigures the ills that are to ensue from Jason and Medea's marriage.

In this perspective, the connections that tie Medea, Antiope, Danae, and Metope become even clearer. Apollonius suggests that these heroines were unsuccessful in marriage because they disrespected the authority of their fathers for love. Apollonius may have found this interpretation of the myth in Euripides' treatment, where Danae seems to be quite different from Sophocles' tragic figure. Apollonius may also have followed the interpretation of the myth that appears on fourth-century vases, where Danae is depicted in strongly erotic terms.⁶⁴ Apollonius casts Danae as a passionate girl who actively betrayed her father for love just like her counter parts, the adulterous Antiope (who is one of Zeus's lovers, like Danae), the amorous maiden Metope, and finally the scheming witch Medea, who is under the spell of Aphrodite.

Throughout its evolution, the myth of Danae was consistently interpreted as a subversion of marriage that results in the unsuccessful establishment of a woman in an *oikos*. The underground chamber, the floating chest, and the disastrous landing in Seriphos all emphasize Danae's ambiguous status as an heiress, a bride of Hades, and finally an unmarried mother. Danae's passage at sea in a chest effects her final separation from Acrisius and from Argos, but does not bring her to the house of a new husband or offer renewed hope as in other myths that feature floating chests. Rather, Danae's distressing sea voyage in the chest underscores her errantry and lack of social ties as a castaway woman destined to remain single. In the general context of Argive myths, the story belongs with the Danaids' murder of their husbands and the Proetids' difficulties in entering into matrimony.⁶⁵

Auge

The myth of Auge is remarkably similar to that of Danae, but unlike the Argive story, it has a happy ending. Auge is the daughter of Aleos, king of Arcadia, and mother of the hero Telephus. After an oracle foretells that his grandson would kill his sons, the Aleads,⁶⁶ Aleos makes Auge the priestess of Athena, which forces her to remain a virgin forever.⁶⁷

However, Heracles happens to pass through the country and rapes Auge in the temple.⁶⁸ Aleos discovers Auge's pregnancy by noticing her growing belly or by being warned by seers that the priestess's pregnancy has caused an outbreak of the plague.⁶⁹ Aleos refuses to believe that Heracles fathered Auge's child, and gives her to the sailor Nauplios to be sold abroad. In other versions, he shuts her in a chest with her child and casts them out to sea.⁷⁰ In yet other versions, the baby Telephus is exposed on Mount Parthenion ("the mountain of the virgin"),⁷¹ suckled by a deer, and raised by herdsmen. In all versions, Auge eventually lands in Mysia where the local king, Teuthras, adopts her as his daughter or marries her.⁷² Teuthras, who is childless, makes Telephus his heir, and upon Teuthras's death, Telephus becomes king of the Mysians. In a development that probably originates in tragedy, Telephus—who has been raised in continental Greece in this version of the myth—goes to seek his mother in Mysia on the advice of the Pythia.⁷³ King Teuthras then asks Telephus for help against his neighbor Idas, in recompense for which he makes Telephus his heir.

The narrative is very similar to the Danae story: both girls become pregnant despite their fathers' precautions against an oracle, both are raped by gods, and both are cast away in chests. Finally, both of their landings are cast as marriage, an unsuccessful one for Danae and a successful one for Auge. Despite these important similarities, no known ancient source compares Auge to Danae, although the myths are fully contemporary and both were particularly popular in the Classical period. Sophocles, Euripides, and Eubulus all presented the myth of Auge on the Athenian stage,⁷⁴ while Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides wrote plays concerning the myth of Danae.⁷⁵ The myth of Auge also appears numerous times in Classical and post-Classical figurative sources, as does the myth of Danae.

Despite these striking similarities, there are significant differences between the myths. The story of Danae is strongly associated with failed marriage, and the story of Auge ultimately presents a successful outcome. Furthermore, Telephus inherits from his adoptive father, king of the Mysians, while Perseus remains attached to the city of Argos, which he eventually claims back. Both myths address issues of marriage and inheritance, but the circumstances they discuss are very different. On the one hand, Danae is a single female heiress, and her son therefore has a strong claim to the throne of Argos. On the other hand, Auge has brothers whose rights to the throne are threatened by the birth of Telephus, who also has a claim to inherit. Thus, the myth of Danae presents the case of a female heiress whose son stands to inherit his grandfather's estate, while the myth of Auge grapples with the issue of competing inheritance claims, which are dramatized as a death threat to Aleos's sons.

Telephus's claims to the throne of Arcadia make it necessary for him to be killed in order to remove the threat he poses. For this reason, Auge and Telephus are exposed and, as is usual in myth, survive the experience but end up in another country. They find a new home and family in Mysia, where the king is childless. Our earliest source on the myth of Auge is a papyrus fragment of Hesiod (*Ehoiai* fr. 165.8–10) in which it is specified that Auge, upon her arrival at the court of Teuthras, is treated with equal honors as the king's own daughters and that Telephus becomes king of the Mysians.

... ἴσον δὲ θυγατράσιν ἦσιν ἐτίμ[α.
ἡ τέκε] Τήλεφον Ἀρκασίδην Μυσῶν βασιλῆ[α,
μιχθε]ῖσ' ἐν φιλότῃ βίῃ Ἡρακλεΐῃ

He honored her equally with his own daughters. [She gave birth to] Telephus descendant of Arcas and king of the Mysians, after she had intercourse with the strength of Heracles.

This story, which also appears in Hyginus's *Fabulae* 99 and 100, has Auge completely abandon Tegea to integrate herself into her new Mysian family. The fragment also specifies that Telephus becomes king of the Mysians, but does not explain how. Either he came to Mysia with Auge in the chest, as for instance in Hecataeus's rendition, or was raised by foster parents in Greece after his exposure on Mount Parthenion and came to Mysia later on the indication of the Delphic oracle, as he does for instance in Apollodorus 3.103-4. Either way, Auge and Telephus completely cut ties with Tegea, and their arrival in Mysia renews the royal dynasty and ensures its continuation. This version of the myth resolves the issue of Auge and Telephus's status, who were undesirable in Tegea because they threatened the dynasty in power, but acquire an elevated status in Mysia, where they refound the ruling line. It is easy to imagine that real situations could be dramatized in this story: competing inheritance claims destabilize the ruling family and are resolved by the emigration of some of its members. The fact that Auge is adopted as Teuthras's daughter marks her complete rejection from Tegea and definitive transition to Mysia.

Alternatively, a large group of sources affirm that Auge marries king Teuthras upon her arrival in Mysia and that Telephus inherits the kingdom upon Teuthras's death.⁷⁶ Thus, unlike Danae, who because she is not married becomes a sexual prey and in some sources Polydectes' concubine, Auge becomes Teuthras's legitimate wife and has a stable home with him in Mysia. In this version of the story, Auge's sea voyage to Mysia can be compared to a bride's transition to her husband's home, whereby she leaves her own family to integrate her husband's house hold. For Teuthras, finding a bride and an heir in the chest thus becomes a sign of divine providence sent through the medium of the sea.⁷⁷

Nevertheless, the gods are remarkably absent from the tale of Auge. Like Zeus, Heracles disappears from the plot after fathering Telephus. He resurfaces only in Hyginus *Fabulae* 100 when Telephus is given the hand of Teuthras's adoptive daughter Auge as a reward for his help against Idas. On the wedding night, Auge decides to kill Telephus in order to remain unsullied by intercourse with a mortal, but a huge serpent separates them at the critical moment. Auge then admits her intentions and Telephus is about to kill her as punishment when Heracles appears and reveals that they are mother and son. The dramatic nature of the plot and its resolution by a *deus ex machina* leaves no doubt as to its origin on the tragic stage. In this case, we note that Heracles' intervention is quite external to the plot and merely prevents an Oedipal relationship between Auge and her son. Furthermore, Auge's plan to kill Telephus on the wedding night recalls the story of the Danaids and suggests contamination between the two myths on the tragic stage.

The only other mention of divine intervention in the story of Auge comes in Strabo 13.1.69 who cites Euripides (cf. Eur. *Telephus*, fr. 696 Nauck). He writes that it was through Athena's providence (Ἀθηνᾶς προνοίᾳ) that the chest carrying Auge and Telephus landed in Mysia. Athena's intervention is quite expected, since she is usually the one to guide and help young heroes on their quest for recognition and leadership, as we have seen in the case of Perseus (Chapter 2). Incidentally, Athena also helps Auge, which is unparalleled in stories of heroines' coming-of-age. Usually, females are helped along in their trials by Artemis, as in the case of Iphigeneia, or the male god who raped them, as in the case of Io. Furthermore, in the case of Danae and in the other versions of the myth of Auge, the sea is entirely devoid of divine presence, in stark contrast with the sea voyages of male heroes who encounter the gods in their adventures on the Ocean or at the bottom of the sea.

Unlike Danae, Auge is not put in parallel with other heroines in our sources. Only in Pausanias 10.28.4 do we find that Auge was placed near Iphimedeia on Polygnotus's famous depiction of Hades at Delphi. The connection between Auge and Iphimedeia is unclear, but in the *Odyssey* 11.305-10, Odysseus declares that after talking with his dead mother Anticleia, he saw Iphimedeia who had intercourse with Poseidon and was

married to Aloeus. The mention of Iphimedeia comes in Odysseus's narration of his conversation with a number of heroines during the *Nekyia* (*Od.* 11.235–332), many of whom had intercourse with gods before marrying mortal men. Odysseus names Tyro, Antiope, Alcmena, Megara, Epicaste (Jocasta), Chloris (the wife of Neleus), Leda, Phaedra, Procris, Ariadne, Maera (daughter of Proetus and mother of Locrus by Zeus), Clymene (mother of Phaethon by Zeus), and Eriphyle (wife of Amphiarus). Perhaps the connection intended by Polygnotus between Iphimedeia and Auge, or at least the connection seen by Pausanias in Polygnotus's work, is the fact that Auge had become the legitimate wife of Teuthras after her intercourse with Heracles, just like Iphimedeia, who became the wife of Aloeus after having two sons by Poseidon. In fact, Pausanias's comments on Auge are limited to her transition to Mysia after her intercourse with Heracles:

ἡ μὲν παρὰ Τεύθραντα ἡ Αὔγη ἀφίκετο ἐς Μυσίαν, καὶ γυναικῶν
ὁπόσαις ἐς τὸ αὐτὸ Ἡρακλέα ἀφικέσθαι λέγουσι, μάλιστα δὴ παῖδα
εὐκότα ἔτεκε τῷ πατρί·

Auge came to Mysia at the house of Teuthras and of all the women who are reported to have had intercourse with Heracles, she bore the son who most resembled his father.

Thus, the fact that Auge became Teuthras's wife after bearing the son of Heracles is her distinguishing feature, one which, for Pausanias and perhaps also for Polygnotus, made her similar to Iphimedeia and other heroines who bore the sons of gods. Here again, we notice that a successful marriage, even after bearing a child, is the main feature stressed by these literary sources.

In the iconographical sources, Auge's crossing of the sea in a larnax is particularly emphasized, which strongly recalls the myth of Danae. In fact, there are two representations of Auge coming out of the larnax in Mysia, one of which, a fragment of a Gallo-Roman terracotta relief medallion, is hardly distinguishable from a representation of Danae and Perseus.⁷⁸ However, for Danae, crossing the sea is only an episode in the long story of her ἀμετρον κακόν. For Auge, while crossing the sea is a harrowing experience where she is at risk of being enslaved or dying in a chest/coffin, once she lands in Mysia her troubles are over and she immediately acquires a legitimate husband and an *oikos*. Thus, in the case of Auge, the passage at sea is a dangerous, yet ultimately successful separation from her original *oikos* that prepares the way for the establishment of a new family, much in the way a bride leaves her family to establish a new one with her husband.⁷⁹ In this case, the chest can perhaps even be associated with a bride's *trousseau*, which she brings with her when entering her husband's home.

Rhoeo

The myth of Rhoeo shares the general features of the myths of Danae and Auge. Rhoeo was the daughter of Staphylus, the son of Dionysus. She was raped by Apollo, but when she became pregnant, her father did not believe that her lover was a god.⁸⁰ He locked her in a chest and cast it into the sea. The chest washed ashore either on Delos (Diod. Sic. 5.62.1–2) or in Euboea (schol. Lyc. *Al.* 570). In the version where Rhoeo lands in Euboea, she gives birth to her baby in a cave near Carystus and calls him Anius because she suffered on his account (διὰ τὸ ἀνιαθῆναι αὐτὴν δι' αὐτόν).⁸¹ There, Rhoeo marries king Zarex who fosters Anius.⁸² Alternatively, Apollo brings Anius to Delos to be reared while Rhoeo remains with Zarex.⁸³

Apollo's active role integrates the story of Rhoeo in its Delian context. Unlike Perseus and Telephus, who must prove themselves and fight to recover their inheritance, Anius immediately obtains favors and an elevated status from his father Apollo. In the version in which Rhoeo lands on Delos, she prays to Apollo after giving birth and begs him to save Anius if he is his child. In response, Apollo ensures Anius's education. Once the child is grown up, Apollo makes him a seer. In the early stages of the Trojan War, Anius appears as the king of Delos. He predicts to the Greek leaders that they will take Troy only after ten years.⁸⁴ Anius entreats the Greeks to remain with him and proposes to supply the army with the gifts his daughters received from Dionysus, namely the ability to turn everything they touch into wine, grain, and oil. However, the Greek captains attempt to carry Anius's daughters off to Troy, but they are finally saved from captivity by Dionysus who turns them into doves. Thus, Anius is fully recognized as the son of Apollo upon his birth, and his character and estate are directly inherited from his divine father.

Ovid's description (*Met.* 13.632–35) of Anchises' visit to Anius on Delos emphasizes the close relationship between Anius and Apollo:

hunc Anius, quo rege homines, antistite Phoebus
rite colebatur, temploque domoque receptit
urbemque ostendit delubraque nota duasque
Latona quondam stirpes pariente retentas.

And there Anius, who piously cared for men as king and for Apollo as priest,
received him in the temple and in his home, and showed him the city, the famous
shrines and the two trees which Latona once held onto while she was in labor.

In this passage, Ovid establishes a relationship between the most famous Delian legends and the story of Anius by representing the priest-king walking among the monuments of Delos.⁸⁵ This treatment, where the well-known story of the birth of Apollo coexists with the relatively obscure myth of Anius, no doubt stems from Ovid's Alexandrian interests. Yet, the passage also shows that the story of Rhoeo and her son Anius was strongly associated with the local context of Delos and was understood in this framework. In fact, inscriptions of Delos attest that Anius was worshipped at two local shrines as Archegetes of the island and as hero.⁸⁶

In this context, Apollo's immediate recognition of his son in response to Rhoeo's prayer is easily understood as an example of the god's benevolence and kindly nature. Similarly, according to Diodorus, Apollo saved Molpadia and Parthenos, Rhoeo's sisters, who threw themselves into the sea after failing to properly guard their father's wine. According to Diodorus, the god showed them this kindness on account of his affection for Rhoeo. He established Molpadia and Parthenos in shrines on the Chersonesus and instituted heroic honors for them (see [Chapter 5](#)).

The story of Rhoeo and Anius also has an important Dionysiac element that interacts with the Apollinian. Indeed, Rhoeo is the daughter of Staphylus and granddaughter of Dionysus, and Anius's daughters are the Oenotropi, three maidens endowed by Dionysus with the ability to change everything they touch into wine, oil, and grain. As mentioned earlier, Dionysus is also the one who saves the girls from captivity in the Greek camp by turning them into doves. As explained by Suárez de la Torre, the close connection between Apollo and Dionysus in the story reflects a broader network of intersections between the cults and myths of the two gods.⁸⁷ Furthermore, Suárez de la Torre observes that Dionysus and Apollo's particular involvement in the story of Rhoeo, Anius, and the Oenotropi reflects the cultic reality of Delos, where both Apollo and Dionysus were worshipped. This situation parallels the dual cult of Apollo and Dionysus at Delphi,

where the two gods shared dominance over the sanctuary. Thus, the alternation of Dionysian and Apollinian influences in the myth of Rhoeo reflects actual cult practice and establishes the story firmly within its local Delian context.

Phronime

In the myths we have seen so far, casting a girl out to sea signifies taking her status away by severing her ties with her family, especially her father. This outcome is motivated by family issues that separate the girl from her household, such as inheritance issues and sexual activity before marriage. The indeterminate space of the sea represents the indeterminate status of the girl, who may end up married and established in a proper household or wander endlessly without a recognized social identity.

The story of Phronime combines both of these outcomes in a single myth. While Phronime herself never gains a fully recognized status after her sea crossing, her son Battus becomes the founding hero of Cyrene, and therefore establishes an *oikos* for an entire community. According to Herodotus, Etearchus, king of Oaxus in Crete, was a widower and had a daughter from his first marriage named Phronime.⁸⁸ When Etearchus remarried, his new wife decided to “act as a stepmother towards Phronime” (ἐδικαίουν καὶ τῷ ἔργῳ εἶναι μητρυνὴ τῇ Φρονίμῃ). She mistreated Phronime and slandered her to her father, in particular accusing her of having intercourse with men. Etearchus was persuaded by these accusations and contrived to have his daughter removed in the following manner. Etearchus took a Theraean trader named Themison as his guest-friend and made him swear to do whatever he asked. Once Themison was under oath, Etearchus ordered him to cast Phronime into the sea. Themison was angry at this, but nonetheless took the girl aboard his ship. To avoid committing murder while discharging his oath, he lowered Phronime into the sea with a rope around her waist and drew her back up again. Once they landed in Thera, Phronime met the rich Polymnestus and became his concubine. Eventually, she gave birth to Battus, who grew up to become the founding hero of Cyrene.⁸⁹

The story displays the same concern for family ties as the other myths studied in this chapter. First, the stepmother, who is the original cause of Phronime’s suffering, represents a disturbance in the dynamics of the nuclear family. Second, Herodotus calls Etearchus’ plan against his daughter an ἔργον οὐκ ὅσιον “an unholy deed.” In this way, Herodotus signals that Etearchus is disrespecting a sacred unwritten law which stipulates that family members owe love and protection to one another. The names of the figures make this aspect of the story very clear: Phronime (“the sensible one”) and Themison (“the just one”) represent innocence, a sound mind, and justice, while Etearchus (“the true leader”) represents unrestrained power. The conflict between these figures recalls the struggle between a tyrant and a weak but righteous figure that Euripides may have dramatized in his *Danae* (see above). The conflict also recalls Sophocles’ *Antigone*, in which Creon (“the Powerful”) imposes an unjust edict on the city and on the righteous Antigone. In all these conflicts, we note that power is in the hands of a male figure and is exercised against a female. In the case of Creon and Etearchus, the female is also a subordinate blood relation, and the stories can therefore be understood to emphasize the responsibilities that are attendant upon the power of the *kyrios*.

It is interesting that Etearchus imagines a precipitation into the sea as an appropriate response to Phronime’s alleged promiscuity. This treatment recalls some versions of the myth of Aerope in which she has intercourse with a slave and is given over to Nauplius by her father Catreus to be drowned.⁹⁰ Nauplius, instead of drowning her as her father requests, brings her to Argos, where she marries Plisthenes or Atreus and gives birth to

Agamemnon and Menelaus. In these stories, the presence of an intermediary removes the direct culpability of murder from the father because it offers the girls a chance of survival. However, in all cases, casting mothers and children at sea indicates their rejection from the community and their intermediary status between life and death.

The result of Phronime's survival is the birth of Battus, who goes on to found Cyrene.⁹¹ While Phronime's status is never fully resolved as a *gynê*—she remains Polymnestus' concubine—Battus founds a very large *oikos* of his own, a prominent and flourishing city. Battus's legitimacy, which is doubtful because of his mother's status, is also ratified by the Delphic oracle, who designates him as the leader of the colonists. Thus, in this case as in the other myths studied in this chapter, the narrative concerning the mother is deeply intertwined with the narrative concerning her son.⁹² All of Phronime's sufferings lead to the successful establishment of Battus as a legitimate political leader and form an important episode in one of the foundation narratives of Cyrene. Battus's original illegitimacy is typical of Greek heroes, who must prove their lineage and their excellence by accomplishing exploits. In contrast, their mothers passively undergo the test of fate, which is ultimately revealed by the turn of events.⁹³

Conclusion

Crossing the sea, for a girl of marriageable age, has an ambiguous significance. On the one hand, the sea is an intermediary space in which girls who are rejected from their families are cast out and lose their status as they wander between life and death. On the other hand, the sea represents the difficult social boundary that must be overcome in order to reach a new life as an established woman.

The sea thus shares the symbolism of marriage, as it represents a definitive and permanent separation that can be compared to death, but also a transition toward a new existence. For this reason, many Greek myths associate sea crossings with marriage when the bride finds herself in an ambiguous situation between life and death. In Euripides' plays, Iphigeneia crosses the sea to Aulis in the hope to contract marriage, but is deceived and narrowly escapes death as a sacrificial victim. With the help of Artemis, she then travels even farther across the sea, to the eastern edge of the world among the Taurians, as a sign of her intermediary status between life and death. Finally, she comes back across the sea to Greece when she is reintegrated to her family by Orestes and betrothed to Pylades.⁹⁴



Figure 13. Attic black-figure amphora, 500–490 BC. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 76.42. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gift of Thomas Gold Appleton. Photo: © 2015 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Similar associations between the sea and marriage appear in the myth of Europa.

Abducted by Zeus, the girl is sought in vain by her brothers across the whole world.⁹⁵ Europa's complete disappearance signals that she has passed in the invisible space in between life and death, where one may also encounter the gods. Eroses frequently fly above Europa's head as an indication of the erotic overtones of the story, yet Hermes also sometimes accompanies her as she crosses the sea on the bull (Fig. 13).⁹⁶ In this way, painters and poets indicate that Europa's sea crossing was a sexual encounter with the king of the gods as well as a death of sorts. Hermes, as the messenger god who mediates between the living, the dead, and the gods, is an appropriate guide in such a journey between continents and between states of existence.

In the story, the sea physically separates Europa from her family and leaves her in a disorienting intermediary space between continents. Moschus (*Europa*, 132–33) writes,

φαίνετο δ' οὐτ' ἀκτὴ τις ἀλὶρροθος οὐτ' ὄρος αἰπύ,
ἀλλ' ἄηρ μὲν ὑπερθεν ἐνερχε δὲ πόντος ἀπείρων

Neither sea-beaten headland appeared nor steep mountain, But only the sky
above and the boundless sea below.

Just like Danae, Europa is lost on the high seas, where only water and sky are visible. The phrase πόντος ἀπείρων “the boundless sea” recalls Simonides' ἄμετρον κακόν “endless trouble” and emphasizes Europa's vulnerability as she departs her homeland forever. Also like Danae, Europa's landing is described as a wedding. Zeus says to her, Κρήτη ... ὅπη νυμφῆα σεῖο ἔσσεται “Crete ... where your wedding will take place” (Mosch. *Eur.* 159–60).⁹⁷ However, unlike Danae, Europa's adventures with Zeus have a happy ending. She marries the king of Crete, Asterion, who adopts her semidivine sons Minos and Rhadamanthys. Thus, the sea is an ambivalent intermediary space for women that represents the liminal status of girls before marriage. Crossing this space is dangerous, yet can bring the reward of marriage and a stable house hold. As Burkert notes, “again and again the path from destruction to a new beginning leads through the sea.”⁹⁸

CHAPTER 4

Arion

The best place to start our inquiry is the most famous dolphin story of all, that of Arion. The story first appears in Herodotus and remained popular until the Roman period, when it was retold by Plutarch with the same plot but with a more thorough investigation of its religious significance.¹⁵ According to Herodotus, Arion of Methymna was the best singer of his time and exercised his talents at the court of Periander, tyrant of Corinth.¹⁶ While he was living there, Arion decided to go and perform in various cities of Italy and Sicily. After his time abroad, Arion hired a Corinthian ship to return home. On the way, the crew conspired to kill him and take the valuables he had earned for his singing.¹⁷ The crew offered Arion a choice: either kill himself, after which the crew would bury him on land, or leap into the sea immediately and forgo burial. Arion realized that he was going to die and requested to sing and play the lyre one last time dressed in his stage regalia, which the crew accepted. According to Herodotus, Arion climbed onto the stern of the ship and sang the Orthian Nome, a hymn to Apollo.¹⁸ According to Plutarch, he was divinely inspired (ὁρμῇ τινι δαμονίῳ) to put on his stage attire as funeral garments and to sing the Pythian Nome as a supplication for his safety and that of those on board. Aulus Gellius 16.19.12–13, 16 reports that Arion asked to sing a song of consolation in his predicament (*carmen casus illius sui consolabile*) and then sang the Orthian Nome. Finally, Tzetzes *Chiliades* 1.17.403 affirms that Arion begged to sing a funerary song (μέλος ἐπιθανάτιον) and then set out to sing all seven Nomes, starting with the Orthian. After the songs were over, he leapt into the sea where a dolphin (or an entire pod of dolphins in Plutarch) took him on its back, carried him to Taenarum, and brought him safely to shore. He then made his way to Corinth and was vindicated from the pirates at the court of Periander. Later, Arion dedicated a small statue of a man riding a dolphin in the sanctuary of Poseidon at Taenarum.¹⁹

The story has important funerary overtones. Arion's choice to leap into the sea and forgo burial suggests that he is giving himself up to the gods in a gesture similar to the Roman *devotio*,²⁰ which is intended to take him directly to Hades without the mediation of burial rites. Thus Arion, already dressed in his funerary attire and playing the lyre, executes a katabasis (descent to the Underworld) into the sea to reach Hades. Gellius and Tzetzes' description of the song as consolatory and funerary, and Plutarch's note, according to which Arion intended his stage garb to become his funerary attire, show that they understood this portion of the story in funerary terms. The dolphin then appears as a psychopomp to carry the dead man away.

Arion's landing at Taenarum helps support this interpretation.²¹ The promontory of Taenarum was widely believed in Antiquity to be an entrance to the Underworld.²² Taenarum is also one of the many locations from which Heracles is said to have entered Hades to fetch Cerberus,²³ and Theseus and Peirithous descended into the Underworld from Taenarum in their quest for Persephone.²⁴ There was also an oracle of the dead in a cave near the sanctuary of Poseidon.²⁵ The dolphin thus brings Arion to the mouth of the Underworld after his katabasis in the water, as if Arion were climbing out not from the sea, but from the earth. In fact, the sea and the Underworld seem to be equivalent here, as Arion returns to life with his *anabasis* (ascent from the Underworld) out of the sea and out of the infernal door at Taenarum. The dolphin helps Arion to cross between the Underworld and the surface and lives up to its reputation as a lucky animal by giving the journey a positive outcome.

According to Plutarch, Arion's katabasis is the occasion for a transcendent experience

in which the singer goes through death and encounters the divine. Indeed, Plutarch describes how Arion decided to sing so as not to be thought less generous than swans, who sing when they are about to die.²⁶ Swans were included in the very special group of mythological figures and creatures that could cross the boundary of the Ocean, and they were often thought to represent the souls of the dead.²⁷ The Graeae, who live beyond the Ocean and guard some of its secrets, are called “swan maidens” by Aeschylus, certainly in a reference to their white hair and old age, but also as an indication of their connection with death.²⁸ In the context of Arion’s leap into the sea, the comparison with a swan suggests that the story is understood as eschatological.

In view of Plato’s strong influence upon Plutarch’s thought, there is little doubt that the reference to swans is intended to evoke Plato’s description of swan songs in the *Phaedo*. In this famous passage, swans are said to know the moment of their death and to sing most beautifully at that time.²⁹ Socrates adds that, contrary to popular belief, swans behave in this manner not because they are lamenting their own death, but rather because they are happy that they will soon join the god whose servants they are. This is precisely what Arion experiences in Plutarch’s narrative. Arion leaps into the sea fully prepared to enter the world of the dead, but instead comes into contact with the gods. After his leap, once he is on the dolphin’s back, Arion does not so much conceive a fear of death or a desire to live as pride for his salvation, since his experience makes him appear to be a favorite of the gods, and since he is now in a position to acquire a sure opinion about the gods (δόξαν βέλαιον).³⁰

This religious interpretation, which is quite elaborate in Plutarch, is already present in Herodotus’s account. As Gray demonstrates, Herodotus focuses on the divine intervention on Arion’s behalf, and connects the story with that of Alyattes by embedding the former into the latter.³¹ In Gray’s view, Herodotus intends to show that both Arion and the Lydian king relied on the gods to save them when their lives were threatened.³² Thus, as early as its first occurrence in Herodotus, the story of Arion was interpreted as a story of contact with the gods and divine salvation. Plutarch elaborated on this early interpretation and made it the centerpiece of his account.

Plutarch insists on the agency of the gods in Arion’s salvation by stressing the justice done to him by the gods and affirming twice that the gods directed the entire turn of events.³³ Plutarch writes that divine justice “sees all things done on land and on the sea,” and thereby assures his readers that the gods punish bad deeds and reward good ones.³⁴ This crucial point allows us to see the dolphin as mediator between men and gods in the story since, as we have seen above, the dolphin was thought to be a righteous animal and a friend of both men and gods. In Plutarch’s rendition, the dolphin carries out divine justice by saving Arion.

Plutarch further emphasizes the importance of justice and righteousness in the story by having the helmsman of the ship warn Arion of the crew’s murderous intentions. This figure is highly reminiscent of the pious helmsman in the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus* who is spared by Dionysus because he recognizes him and refuses to participate in the attack. In both the hymn and Plutarch’s account, the figure of the pious helmsman serves as a positive counterpart to the crew and shows that benevolent men can be found even in the most unlikely situations.

Furthermore, the figure of the helmsman shows that Plutarch considered the story of Arion and the *Hymn to Dionysus* to be similar.³⁵ As we will see in more detail in [Chapter 6](#), the story of the pirates also involves a discovery of the divine through a leap into the sea, and in both stories dolphins act as mediators between life and death as well as between humans and gods. Furthermore, the change operated in Arion by the acquisition of special knowledge about the gods recalls the pirates’ encounter with the divine. In both cases, a change in character and status is operated. Arion becomes recognized as a

favorite of the gods, and the pirates abandon their sordid life to become Dionysus's associates in the form of dolphins. Finally, it is important to note that Arion was considered to be the inventor of the dithyramb, which associates him closely with Dionysus and may have contributed to shaping a parallel between the story of Arion and the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus* in Plutarch's mind.³⁶

Both Plutarch and Herodotus are silent on the exact identity of the gods involved in Arion's adventure. It seems that both authors choose to leave this point unclear in order to designate the immortals in general. Nonetheless, specific gods, especially Poseidon and Apollo, play a role in the story. Gray stresses the importance of Poseidon,³⁷ since Arion's itinerary takes him from Tarentum, a city whose patron deity was Poseidon, to Taenarum, one of Poseidon's most important sanctuaries.³⁸ In addition, in Plutarch's account, Arion's adventure happens during a night of celebration following a three-day sacrifice and offering to Poseidon. Arion therefore comes from Poseidon's city, then lands at the temple of Poseidon during a festival of Poseidon, after a journey through Poseidon's marine kingdom. Finally, Arion dedicates a statue of himself riding the dolphin in Poseidon's shrine.³⁹

Besides Poseidon, Apollo also plays a role in this complex narrative. Klement has stressed that Apollo's epiclesis as Delphinus and Arion's choice of hymn are clues to the involvement of Apollo in the story.⁴⁰ However, although the exact character and attributes of Apollo Delphinus are still unclear, it seems that his cult was above all connected with the ceremonies surrounding the coming-of-age of boys, while Arion is an adult man.⁴¹ Nevertheless, Arion does play the lyre, an instrument that is closely connected with Apollo. The lyre may be a sign of Arion's inspired state at the time of his leap, which carries him through a katabasis and anabasis. In fact, Plutarch mentions that Arion is divinely inspired (ὁρμῇ τινι δαίμονι) and that he sang the Pythian Nome, which may give an Apollonian context to the story, at least in Plutarch's rendition. Overall, the story emphasizes Arion's contact with the divine, and the dolphin is the symbol of this contact, as well as the vehicle of Arion's voyage through death during which he discovers a higher truth about the gods. As a loyal and friendly psychopomp and a servant of the gods, the dolphin ensures that Arion's leap does not end with oblivion in the sea. Rather, the dolphin provides a safe crossing through death and is the instrument of divine revelation.

Hesiod

Arion's katabasis at sea and return is by no means an isolated occurrence in Greek mythology. Hesiod, another divinely inspired poet, returns from the depths of the sea with the help of a dolphin, thereby revealing the gods' concern for him. Like Arion, Hesiod has a special status due to his poetic inspiration. Hesiodic poetry embodied traditional Greek wisdom, and numerous epigrams and stories about the life of Hesiod testify to his unmatched reputation as a sage.⁴² For this reason, per se traditions, starting in the fifth century,⁴³ recount that Hesiod did not entirely leave the earth after his death, but remained in Greece as a benevolent hero. The Greeks believed that Hesiod himself, just like his works and the wisdom they carried, was able to transcend the boundaries of time and even death.

The story starts at the funeral games of Amphidamas, where Hesiod competes against Homer and wins the prize, a tripod.⁴⁴ The riddles the two poets have to solve testify to their cleverness and wisdom, in particular that of the winner, Hesiod. After his victory, Hesiod travels to Delphi, where the Pythia warns him to avoid the temple of Nemean Zeus because he will die there. Misunderstanding the oracle, a *topos* (commonplace) in

Greek mythology, Hesiod avoids Nemea and travels to either Locris or Naupactus. There, he is falsely accused of seducing the daughter of his host (or of having helped the seducer) and is killed by her brothers near a local sanctuary of Nemean Zeus. The brothers then throw Hesiod's body into the sea, either to conceal the murder or perhaps to cleanse the pollution caused by Hesiod's alleged crime.⁴⁵

However, Hesiod does not perish entirely. A dolphin, exhibiting its usual sense of justice, respect for the dead, and respect for the customs of burial, brings Hesiod's body back to shore during a festival of Poseidon or Ariadne.⁴⁶ The timing strongly recalls Arion's landing on Taenarum during a celebration in honor of Poseidon and suggests that the dolphin, in this story too, is an agent of the divine will. In fact, Hesiod's body is certainly saved by the dolphin because, as an inspired poet, Hesiod is a favorite of the gods (cf. Plutarch, where Arion says that he will now appear as a favorite of the gods).

After Hesiod's body is found on the beach, the inhabitants of Naupactus (Pausanias), Locri (Plutarch, *Banquet*), Locrian Oinoe (*Certamen*), or Oineon near Naupactus (Thucydides) recognize the famous poet and bury him with honor in the temple of Nemean Zeus or in a secret location near the shrine.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the murderers attempt to escape by sea but are shipwrecked (Tzetzes *Vita Hes.* 34–40), or are killed by Zeus's lightning bolt (*Certamen* 238–40), as an indication of the act of divine justice done in favor of the poet. In Pollux and Plutarch's version of the story, Hesiod's dog marks his master's killers to the townspeople by its insistent barking, and they are punished.⁴⁸ In this rendition, the dog shares the intelligence and sense of justice of the dolphin and exhibits the proverbial loyalty of canines.⁴⁹

At some point after this first burial,⁵⁰ the Pythia orders the Orchomenians to bring Hesiod's body to their own city in order to cure a plague.⁵¹ Despite the Locrians' attempts to conceal Hesiod's bones (Plut. *Conv.* 162e), the Orchomenians find the relics with the help of the Pythia and a crow (Paus. 9.38.2–4).⁵² This crow, the third animal to play a role in the narrative, introduces a connection with the god Apollo, a link that is strengthened by the importance of the Pythia's revelations in the story and the divine inspiration of both the Pythia and Hesiod himself. Thus, just as in the story of Arion, both Apollo and Poseidon play a role in the story, and, most important, a strong connection with the divine will and divine intervention is emphasized.

After finding Hesiod's bones, the Orchomenians bury them in the Mycenaean *tholos* (beehive tomb) that stood on their marketplace and that was reputedly the tomb of their founder, Minyas.⁵³ This location is significant either as an etiology for the fact that there existed two tombs of Hesiod or as an attempt to bring Panhellenic prestige to Orchomenus.⁵⁴ An epigram survives that was purportedly inscribed on the tholos to commemorate Hesiod's second burial there. Our sources present minor variations, but the text always remains essentially the same:⁵⁵

Ἄσκηρ μὲν πατρὶς πολυλῆιος, ἀλλὰ θανόντος
ὅστέα πληξίππων γῇ Μινυῶν κατέχει
Ἡσιόδου, τοῦ πλείστον ἐν Ἑλλάδι κῦδος ὀρεῖται
ἀνδρῶν κρινομένων ἐν βασάνωι σοφίης. (Paus. 9.38.4)

His fatherland is wheat-rich Ascrea, but now that he is dead, the land of the horse-taming Minyans holds the bones of Hesiod, and he will be most famous in Greece, for men will judge him by the touchstone of wisdom.

The epigram emphasizes Hesiod's wisdom, which is his chief claim to glory. But the epigram also foregrounds the city of Orchomenus, which lends credence to the interpretation according to which the legend of Hesiod's burial in Orchomenus was meant to support the city's claim to political leadership and Panhellenic status. This is

especially convincing in view of the arrangement of the epigram, which mentions Hesiod's Panhellenic glory immediately after Orchomenus, thereby creating a connection between the two in the audience's mind.

The Aristotelian *Constitution of the Orchomenians* preserves a second epigram, also purported to have been inscribed on the tholos at Orchomenus and reportedly composed by Pindar:⁵⁶

Χαῖρε δις ἡβήσας καὶ δις τάφου ἀντιβολήσας
Ἡσίοδ'; ἀνθρώποις μέτρον ἔχων σοφίης.

Farewell, Hesiod, you who have been twice young and twice entombed, possessed of a due mea sure of human wisdom.

This epigram is difficult to date, but considering its grammar and diction it is possible that it was composed during the Archaic period.⁵⁷ Its interpretation, however, is even more challenging than its dating. We may perhaps suppose, following McKay, that the two youths and two burials refer to the two periods of Hesiod's legendary life, during which he was first a peasant in Ascra and then an inspired poet.⁵⁸ Or else we might accept the argument of Scodel, who suggests that the two burials refer to Hesiod's two tombs in the tradition, and that the two youths indicate the existence of a tradition according to which Hesiod had a second life.⁵⁹ Scodel specifies that such a tradition may never have coalesced into a coherent narrative, but rather was formed by a multiplicity of stories that borrowed from different myths and belief systems involving metempsychosis, katabasis, rejuvenation, or resurrection.

While it is impossible to tell from the surviving sources whether such a tradition relating to Hesiod really did circulate, Scodel is quite right that Hesiod's poetic inspiration and proverbial wisdom evoke the idea of conquering death in some way or other—similar stories were told concerning other poets and wise men such as Orpheus and Empedocles. This reading also explains the proverb τὸ Ἡσιόδειον γῆρας "Hesiodic old age,"⁶⁰ as an expression of not only the extraordinary old age the poet reportedly reached, but also the transcendent power of his wisdom and divine inspiration. Indeed, many inspired and wise figures were said to be remarkably old, like Tiresias who reportedly lived over seven generations of men.⁶¹ Moreover, as mentioned above in [Chapter 1](#), divinities such as Nereus and Proteus were known as Old Men of the Sea and represented divine knowledge and wisdom. The attribution of extreme old age to Hesiod is yet another way to express the idea that his poetic inspiration and surpassing wisdom allowed him to overcome the normal boundaries of mortal existence.

The traditions about Hesiod's life are replete with transcendent experiences. As we have seen, Hesiod's encounter with the Muses in the *Theogony* was interpreted as an account of the transition between two very distinct phases of his life. Second, we recall how Hesiod's body was retrieved from the sea by a dolphin to receive burial in accordance with divine will. And then there is the report of how the Orchomenians offered Hesiod a second burial in their city in order to cure a plague. In all these cases, Hesiod transcends what normally constitutes an impassable boundary for humans. When he receives divine inspiration from the Muses, he acquires knowledge and wisdom that are unattainable for ordinary men. When Hesiod's body is rescued by a dolphin, the gods prevent a loss that is almost always inevitable in the depths and the immensity of the sea.⁶² At last, when the Orchomenians bury Hesiod for a second time, he is honored in the city alongside the heroic founder Minyas and offers supranatural protection against the plague, thereby continuing his existence in a different manner.

Hesiod's attainment of a status above that of ordinary mortals is well expressed by the legend according to which his bones were brought to Orchomenus to cure a plague.

The poet's body protects the ground in which it is buried, much like the body of Oedipus protects Athens in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*. This heroic status is reflected in an epigram from the Greek Anthology (7.55) that is attributed to either Alcaeus of Mytilene (ca. 620 BC) or Alcaeus of Messenia (fl. 200 BC):

Λοκρίδος ἐν νέμει σκιερῷ νέκυν Ἡσιόδοιο
Νύμφαι κρηνίδων λούσαν ἀπὸ σφετέρων
καὶ τάφον ὑψώσαντο· γάλακτι δὲ ποιμένες αἰγῶν
ἔρραναν, ξανθῷ μιζάμενοι μέλιτι·
τοίην γὰρ καὶ γῆρυν ἀπέπνεεν ἑννέα Μουσέων
ὁ πρέσβυς καθαρῶν γευσάμενος λιβάδων.

In a shady Locrian meadow, the Nymphs washed Hesiod's body with water from their springs and built him a tomb; on it, the goatherds poured milk mixed with golden honey; for such a voice had the old man exhaled, he who had tasted water from the pure fountains of the nine Muses.

The fact that the epigram mentions Locris as the place of Hesiod's burial is consistent with the remainder of the tradition, whether the epigram refers to Hesiod's first or second burial.⁶³ The goatherds' libations of milk and honey are especially suggestive of a heroic status. Indeed, the divinatory properties of honey and its strong connections with poetic inspiration are well known.⁶⁴ Honey could be mixed with milk or oil to concoct the *melikraton* "honey mixture" that was poured as part of wineless libations known as *nephalia*.⁶⁵ The exact circumstances of this practice, which remained in use from the Archaic period down to Roman times, are unclear. It seems that this type of libation was offered mainly to the dead and to chthonic divinities as well as to certain heroes.⁶⁶ While the epigram is certainly no proof that such cultic activity actually took place on the tomb of Hesiod, or at any location connected with Hesiod,⁶⁷ it shows that such a representation was consistent with the Greek perception of the poet. The ancients considered that after his death and burial (or burials), Hesiod became a hallowed figure—an intermediary between men and gods.

The story of the rescue of Hesiod's body by a dolphin and his two burials is comparable to the stories of Orpheus and Arion, two inspired poets whose talents allowed them to pass beyond the boundaries of the mortal world. Neither Arion nor Orpheus was divinized, yet their status among mortals was special and their talent and inspiration transcended death. Arion returns from the infernal door at Taenarum on a dolphin, and Orpheus charms Hades with his lyre. After Orpheus dies at the hands of Maenads, his head keeps prophesying, defying the finality of death and dismemberment. Similarly, Hesiod's connection with the divine does not die with him, but his body is returned from the depths of the sea, and his tomb provides super natural protection to the Orchomenians. As a result, *nephalia* in his honor are thought to be appropriate.

The transcendence of death and divine favor granted to inspired poets may be one important reason why a statue of Hesiod was placed alongside those of Arion, Orpheus, Linos, Thamyris, and Sacadas in the sacred grove of the Muses on Mount Helicon (Paus. 9.29.3–30.3). All these poets possessed extraordinary talent and remained famous long after their death. Many statues of the gods surrounded them, namely the Muses with their nurse Eupheme, Apollo, Dionysus, and Hermes. The association with these gods emphasizes the divine favor enjoyed by the poets as well as their connections with the lyre, inspiration, trance, and death. Near the spring Hippocrene, there was also a lead tablet inscribed with Hesiod's *Works and Days*, which was dedicated to the Muses (Paus. 9.31.4). Poetic talent and poetic works, in accordance with the well-known image, are enduring monuments that traverse time and vanquish death. Accordingly, the dolphin's

intervention to rescue Hesiod's body represents the fact that Hesiod's poetry and wisdom were beyond the reach of death. His return from the sea on the back of an animal that is both *philomousos* (a friend of the Muses) and *psychopompos* appropriately represents the undying nature of poetry.

Melicertes

The story of Hesiod is easily compared to that of Melicertes despite the fact that, in the latter, Melicertes is a child, whereas in the former, Hesiod is an old man. Indeed, both Hesiod and Melicertes are dead when they are rescued by a dolphin, both are brought to shore and buried on land as a result of the dolphin's intervention, and both receive heroic honors. We have seen that in the story of Hesiod, the rescue by a dolphin symbolizes the beliefs that were attached to the person of Hesiod and to his poetry. So, in the story of Melicertes, what beliefs about the child-hero does his rescue from the sea represent?

Melicertes dies when his mother Ino leaps into the sea while clasping him in her arms.⁶⁸ In some versions, Ino kills Melicertes by boiling him in a cauldron before jumping.⁶⁹ In all versions, Ino's leap results in her transformation into the goddess Leukothea, who helps sailors in distress such as Odysseus (*Od.* 5.333–38). As for Melicertes, his body is rescued by a dolphin and brought to the Isthmus where king Sisyphus finds it and buries it. Sisyphus then institutes the Isthmian Games in honor of Melicertes, who takes the name of Palaemon, "the wrestler."⁷⁰

As in the story of Hesiod, the dolphin accompanies the dead Melicertes to his final resting place and ensures that he receives a proper burial. Once again, the dolphin shows sympathy for humans in distress and is concerned with the rites of burial. In addition, the dolphin is the instrument of the divine will, since it ensures that Melicertes will be properly buried and receive heroic honors. In fact, many of our sources mention that Ino and Melicertes are turned into Leukothea and Palaemon at the request of various gods, such as Dionysus, Poseidon, the Nereids, and Venus.⁷¹ The Isthmian Games are also dedicated to Palaemon at the request of the Nereids.⁷² Thus, the dolphin's actions reflect the divine will that Melicertes' body be saved from the sea and that the child receive heroic honors at the Isthmian Games.

The cult of Palaemon at the Isthmus was celebrated within the precinct of Poseidon and was closely linked to the cult of the sea god and with the games celebrated in his honor.⁷³ While the cult of Poseidon at the Isthmus is attested as early as the eighth century BC, it is unclear when the cult of Palaemon originated.⁷⁴ Pindar fr. *Isthm.* 5–6 (Snell-Maehler) mentions Melicertes' burial at the Isthmus and has been used as evidence for an early cult of Palaemon at the site,⁷⁵ but no conclusive archaeological evidence of a pre-Roman cult has been found, even after large-scale excavations at Isthmia.⁷⁶ Our earliest established archaeological evidence for the Palaemonion (the temple of Melicertes-Palaemon) and for sacrifices dedicated to the child-hero dates from the Roman period, after a period of abandonment following the sack of Corinth by Mummius in 146 BC. At this occasion, the Isthmian sanctuary was destroyed, the great altar of Poseidon was ripped out, and a road was made to pass through the foundations of the sanctuary. However, under Augustus, or perhaps somewhat earlier, Roman authorities renewed the permission of celebrating *agones* (athletic contests) at the Isthmus, but such activities seem not to have started again in earnest until the reign of Nero.⁷⁷ So, while a pre-Roman cult of Melicertes-Palaemon may well have existed—the cults of other child-heroes such as Opheltis at the site of Panhellenic games provide a convincing parallel⁷⁸—there are no undisputed archaeological traces of it.

The abandonment of Isthmia,⁷⁹ between the sack of Corinth in 146 BC and the

founding of the *Colonia Laus Julia Corinthensis* by Caesar in 44 BC, created a sharp discontinuity in the celebration of Isthmian cults.⁸⁰ When Isthmia was reoccupied, its new inhabitants were Greeks from various regions of the Greek world as well as Hellenized Romans, and it is likely that they had only scarce knowledge about the traditional cult activities and practices at Isthmia. According to Piérart, the colonists did not renovate the buildings, the games, or the Isthmian cults in accordance with earlier practices. Rather, they interpreted the ruined buildings and installations they found in accordance to well-known myths.⁸¹ In the case of the cult of Melicertes, Piérart proposes that the underground hydraulic installations found near the temple of Poseidon were interpreted by the colonists as the adyton of Melicertes. These installations consist of a sharply bent underground corridor connected to two reservoirs. These hydraulic conduits, which fell into disuse long before the construction of the temple of Poseidon, originally served to wet the race track of the early stadium, which was located very close to the later temple. Since the hydraulic installations had been out of use for a long period, their function was no longer understood. However, the well-known myth of Melicertes' rescue by a dolphin that brought him to the Isthmus suggested to the colonists that an underground tunnel located near the temple of Poseidon was likely to be the tomb of the dead child-hero. Philostratus, influenced by this Roman reinterpretation of the installations at Isthmia, writes in *Imagines* 2.16 that the underground crypt was opened by Poseidon himself, who cleaved the earth of the Isthmus for Melicertes' body to be deposited there. Accordingly, the colonists built a circular temple to Palaemon, a tholos, over the old underground hydraulic installations and represented the dead child on the dolphin inside the tholos on coinage.⁸² The legend circulated that Palaemon himself was hidden in the crypt.⁸³ The tholos shape was appropriate for the monument since *tholoi* are often connected with the dead and with chthonian divinities and often stand over crypts.⁸⁴

The idea that the dead child-hero Palaemon resided in the crypt gave rise to a cult with strong chthonic and mystery overtones.⁸⁵ It is reported that athletes competing at the Isthmian Games descended into the crypt to swear an oath to Palaemon during the night before the contests began.⁸⁶ The otherworldly character of the practice certainly emphasized the solemnity of the oath for the young athletes. By swearing their oath, they entered into a sacred compact that was guaranteed by the powers of the Underworld. Pausanias 2.2.1 indicates that no Corinthian or foreigner who swore an oath in the crypt of Palaemon could ever escape his pledge by any machination. This recalls the fact that oaths in Greek and Roman culture were often associated with the powers of the Underworld, notably the great oath of the gods that was sworn by the Styx. Furthermore, many oath-taking ceremonies required that the parties have their feet immersed in water, as if to replicate the Underworld waters of the Styx.⁸⁷ It may be for this reason that the Roman colonists found the crypt appropriate for oath taking. Since the underground installations bore clear signs of being designed for carrying water—although there was no longer any water source in the immediate vicinity and the reservoirs were in disrepair—they imagined that solemn oath taking would have taken place there. Piérart points out that it is unlikely that the athletes' oaths would have been sworn there in Classical times, since such oaths were public and required the presence of *horkôtai*, magistrates in charge of registering oaths.⁸⁸ Nonetheless, this conception of the underground installations informs us on the perception of Palaemon by worshippers of the Roman period.

The cult of Melicertes-Palaemon celebrated at the Isthmus emphasized the fact that the child was dead. Statius *Thebaid* 6.10–14 insists on the dark character of the cult of Palaemon and mentions that dirges were sung in the course of the cult. Furthermore, the cult of Palaemon involved the nocturnal sacrifice of black bulls, which were thrown into a *bothros* (sacrificial pit).⁸⁹ This type of sacrifice, called *enagisterion*, was commonly offered to the dead.⁹⁰ Throwing the animal into the pit symbolizes an offering to the powers of

the Underworld, as the body of the victim is seen to be engulfed into the earth.⁹¹ The archaeological digs at the Palaemonion have revealed three such sacrificial pits dating from the first to the third century AD and located near the tholos of Palaemon. The pits contained burnt animal bones, pottery, and lamps.⁹²

In addition to their funereal and chthonic aspect, the sacrifices to Palaemon are described by Philostratus the Athenian as having orgiastic characteristics: “they resemble an initiatory and inspired dirge” (θρήνην εἰκασταὶ τελεστικῶν τε καὶ ἐνθέων).⁹³ Philostratus the Younger in *Imagines* 2.16 calls the rites of Palaemon ὄργια and mentions that they were instituted as secret rites by Sisyphus. Finally, Plutarch *Theseus* 25 refers to the nocturnal sacrifices for Palaemon as τελεταί “mysteries.” No further information is preserved about these secret ceremonies, but the words used to describe them and their general character recall other mystery cults in which chthonic symbols, the opposition between life and death, and direct contact with the divine are emphasized, such as the Eleusinian mysteries and the mysteries of Dionysus. Thus, worshippers may have thought that through their nocturnal offerings to the dead boy Melicertes they could get in direct contact with him, and this was also the purpose of the oath-taking ceremony.

The comparison between the cult of Melicertes-Palaemon and the mysteries of Dionysus is meaningful since both the myth of Palaemon and the cult at the Isthmus had an important Dionysiac component.⁹⁴ Pausanias 1.44.7–9 insists on the familial connections between Melicertes and Dionysus. The child is Dionysus’s nephew since his mother Ino is the daughter of Cadmos and the sister of Semele. After Semele’s death, Ino became Dionysus’s nurse, and as discussed below in [Chapter 5](#), an important version of her myth describes her as the first Bacchant. Accordingly, some Corinthian coins represent Melicertes-Palaemon riding a dolphin while holding a *thyrsos*, the Bacchant’s staff.⁹⁵ The pine tree, which is often associated with Dionysus (e.g., thyrsoi are made of pine wood and adorned with pine cones),⁹⁶ was also associated with Melicertes at Isthmia. Pine trees stood in the Poseidonion near the shrine of Palaemon, and one grew near Melicertes’ altar.⁹⁷ Many coins also show the child with a dolphin and a pine tree.⁹⁸ Last, the sacrifice of a black bull to Melicertes can be associated with Poseidon, as in Philostratus’s account,⁹⁹ but the bull can also be associated with Dionysus’s taurine manifestations.¹⁰⁰

These connections with Dionysus and the strong chthonic and mystery overtones of the cult suggest that, at least in the Roman period, the figure of Melicertes-Palaemon was interpreted in two distinct yet closely related ways. First, the myth of Melicertes’ death and rescue by a dolphin and his burial at the Isthmus was associated with a propitiatory cult intended to appease him, which included ceremonies for the dead, such as *enagismata*.¹⁰¹ The dolphin is seen to act as an agent of the divine will by rescuing the innocent dead boy and facilitating his return to land for burial. Thus, the myth was interpreted in a similar way to the legends concerning the death of Hesiod, as both protagonists are seen to overcome an unjust death with the help of the gods and to gain heroic honors.¹⁰²

The second interpretation of the myth of Melicertes is heavily influenced by the Dionysiac aspect of the myth of Ino, which stems from Euripides’ *Medea* and was particularly important in the Roman period.¹⁰³ In this view, both the myth and the cult of Melicertes were interpreted as an instance of transcendence of either death or grief under the patronage of Dionysus. The dolphin can thus be seen as Dionysus’s special messenger—a role the animal often plays, as in the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus* or in sympotic imagery, where the dolphin represents a direct contact between the god and his worshippers (see [Chapter 6](#)). In the case of Melicertes, the dolphin represents a passage through death under divine patronage. Dionysus is particularly appropriate for this role, since he presides over transitions between the surface and the Underworld and since his

cult put his worshippers in direct contact with him. For instance, during the Athenian festival of the Anthesteria, the dead roam the city after the opening of the jars of new wine. Perhaps as a representation of the Anthesteria, in the *Frogs*, Aristophanes famously portrayed the god himself descending to the Underworld. Finally, Maenads and symposiasts were thought to come into direct contact with Dionysus through trance and drunkenness. The Dionysiac context of the myth and cult of Melicertes thus emphasizes the notion that the worshippers could come into direct contact with the dead child-hero by way of offerings to the dead and mystery celebrations.

City Founders, Dolphin Riders, and Delphi

While the three myths studied above emphasize the transition to death and the afterlife through the sea, another important group of myths focuses on colonization under the auspices of the Delphian Apollo. In these myths, the sea is the dangerous space that separates the colonists from their new city. The courageous founders risk death at sea, but dolphins rescue them from shipwreck and drowning. What does the founder's shipwreck signify, and why is a dolphin felt to be appropriate for his rescue? Apollo's epicleris as Delphinus is an obvious and important avenue for interpretation, but we must not forget what we have learned from the three myths studied above concerning the dolphin's function as mediator between life, death, and the gods. A careful analysis reveals remarkable consistency across stories that have seemingly little to do with one another.

Enalus

The myth of Enalus is embedded in the foundation myth of Lesbos and is preserved in the fragments of the Hellenistic historians Anticleides of Athens and Myrsilus of Lesbos as well as in Plutarch's *Banquet of the Seven Sages*.¹⁰⁴ According to these authors, an oracle (presumably from Delphi in Anticleides and Plutarch, but from Amphitrite in Myrsilus) ordered the colonists to sacrifice a bull to Poseidon and a virgin to Amphitrite by casting them into the sea off a promontory called Mesogeion. Plutarch, who gives the most detailed account, reports how the victim was chosen. According to him, there were eight chiefs for the expedition to Lesbos. Since one of them, Echelaus, was still an unmarried youth, the seven others cast lots to decide whose daughter would be sacrificed and the lot befell Smintheus. However, when his daughter was about to be cast into the sea, a young and noble member of the expedition named Enalus—"He who dwells in the sea" who was in love with her—jumped and clasped her in his arms. Both disappeared into the sea. Later, Enalus reappeared in Lesbos and said that he and Smintheus's daughter had been rescued by a dolphin and brought safely to shore. When an enormous wave threatened the island and all the inhabitants were terrified, Enalus went alone near the sea to face it. A group of octopods followed him from there to the sanctuary of Poseidon. The biggest octopus carried a stone, which Enalus dedicated to Poseidon.

Anticleides' account omits the intervention of the dolphin. In this version, Smintheus's daughter never returns to Lesbos but remains in the sea to live with the Nereids. As for Enalus, Anticleides reports that he fed the horses of Poseidon under the sea and that he was able to return to land because an enormous wave washed him ashore. As a token of the veracity of his story, Enalus carries a golden cup of amazing (θαυμασιόν) workmanship.

In both accounts, the leap into the sea that should spell the deaths of Enalus and his lover actually turns into a foray into the world of the gods, much like in the story of

Arion. In Myrsilus's report, the dolphin plays its usual role as rescuer of humans in distress at sea and acts as the instrument of divine revelation. Furthermore, by saving a sacrificial victim whose consecration had been ordered by an oracle, the dolphin acts as the agent of the divine will and indicates that the purpose of the sacrifice was not the death of the victim, but rather a sacred exchange and contract between the gods and the colonists. The sea is the locus of this transaction and revelation, and the lovers' rescue by the dolphin can therefore be read as a sign of divine favor for Lesbos.

Enalus's new status as the protégé of the gods is proven when he faces a tidal wave and survives. At this occasion, his retinue of octopods signals his extraordinary position in Poseidon's esteem. In fact, Plutarch *Conv.* 163c–d writes that this incident was the occasion for Enalus to offer a proof of the marvelous tales he told the Lesbians about the events that surrounded his rescue by the dolphin. Plutarch does not specify what these events were, but they may be those reported by Anticleides, namely that Enalus fed the horses of Poseidon under the sea. Anticleides makes it even clearer that Enalus and his lover enjoy divine favor. The girl (who remains nameless) becomes a companion of the Nereids. As for Enalus, he apparently gets a glimpse of Poseidon's underwater kingdom, since he relates that he fed the horses of this god. The golden cup that he shows the Lesbians after his return is also a tangible token of divine favor, comparable to the cloak and crown that Theseus brings back to the surface after his leap into the sea in Bacchylides 17 (see [Chapter 3](#)).

The fact that Enalus and Smintheus's daughter transcend the boundaries of ordinary mortal experience is clearly signaled in the sources. Both Plutarch and Anticleides use forms of the verb *phainein* to describe the disappearance and reappearance of the lovers. Anticleides writes (through Athenaeus), ὑπὸ κύματος αὐτοὺς ἀμφοτέρους κρυφθέντας ἀφανεῖς γενέσθαι “both of them disappeared, hidden by the waves.” Plutarch in *Banquet of the Seven Sages* 163c reports, ὑστέρῳ δὲ χρόνῳ τὸν Ἐναλὸν φασιν ἐν Λέσβῳ φανῆναι “they report that Enalus reappeared in Lesbos later.” This choice of words is significant as it indicates that the lovers had entered the invisible world of the gods and that Enalus's return to Lesbos is in fact an epiphany that confirms he is a favorite of the gods. In the same work, Plutarch also uses the verb *phainein* to describe the divine favor enjoyed by Arion after his rescue by a dolphin: ὥς θεοφιλῆς ἀνὴρ φανείη “that he might appear as a man beloved by the gods” (*Conv.* 161e). This aspect of the story recalls Theseus's epiphany when he returns from the depths of the sea in Bacchylides *Ode* 17.119: νᾶα παρὰ λεπτόπρυμνον φάνη “he appeared by the ship with the slender stern.” In all three cases, the men visit the divine world and return with proof of divine favor. Like Theseus and Arion, Enalus accomplishes a katabasis in the sea and returns not only alive, but as a confirmed favorite of the gods, which allows him to transition to manhood and become a leader in his community.¹⁰⁵ In all three cases, dolphins are the guides and saviors of the men in their journeys (see Bacchylides 17.97–98) and thus act as intermediaries between mortals and immortals.

Enalus's young lover leaves the narrative quickly. She either returns to Lesbos with Enalus—the sources give no further details about her destiny—or disappears forever and joins the company of the Nereids. As Bonnechere points out, this is an instance of the famous “Bride of Hades” motif.¹⁰⁶ The girl is to be sacrificed to ensure the welfare of the community and therefore forgoes marriage and womanhood. However, her early and tragic disappearance is compensated by her entrance into the divine world.

As we will see in [Chapter 5](#), this is a common pattern for young girls and women who dive into the sea. Instead of returning as glorious favorites of the gods like their male counterparts, they usually remain in the sea as marine deities or receive divine honors on land as heroines and goddesses. They are also often metamorphosed into aquatic birds as an indication of their transition to the divine sphere. Thus, while both males and females

can reach the divine world by way of a leap into the sea, the glory and elevated social and political status that accompanies a safe return from such a voyage is reserved for males. For females, the transition is a one-way ticket, and they do not return to tell the tale, although they become hallowed by their transition out of the mortal realm.

Taras and Phalanthus

Like the story of Enalus, the stories of Taras and Phalanthus are linked to foundation myths—in this case, the foundation myths of Tarentum. The stories of Taras and Phalanthus are so deeply intertwined that the ancients themselves were often unable to distinguish the heroes clearly. According to Pausanias, Taras was the son of Poseidon and a nymph of Southern Italy named Satyria, and he gave his name to the city of Tarentum (which is called “Taras” in Greek).¹⁰⁷ Still according to Pausanias, the founder of Tarentum was a Spartan named Phalanthus who came to Italy as the leader of the Partheniae on the orders of the Delphic oracle.¹⁰⁸ He was shipwrecked in the Crisaian Bay near Delphi and rescued by a dolphin, which brought him all the way to the site of the future city of Tarentum.¹⁰⁹ According to Servius, Taras was the founder of the city and the leader of the Spartan Partheniae, but Phalanthus later took over and ensured the development of Tarentum.¹¹⁰



Figure 14. Silver stater of Tarentum, 473–460 BC. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 04.303. Henry Lillie Pierce Fund. Photo: © 2015 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

The coinage of Tarentum only adds to the confusion. From the Classical period onward, many coins of Tarentum represent a man riding a dolphin with a snake, dolphin, or sometimes a trident in hand (Fig. 14). It is unclear exactly who these coins depict, Taras or Phalanthus. Aristotle affirms that the dolphin rider on the city’s coinage is Taras,

because of the word ΤΑΡΑΣ minted on the coins themselves.¹¹¹ However, it seems more probable that the legend (the writing on the coin) refers to the name of the city and not to the hero, as is usual on coinage. Since the literary sources are irreconcilable, it is impossible to decide in favor of one or the other hero, and the arguments proposed by various scholars have not settled the question.¹¹² In the end, it is less important to find out whether Taras or Phalanthus is depicted on these coins than to note that, from the Classical period onward, the Tarentines used the dolphin rider to represent their city. This representation clearly refers to the miraculous rescue of the founder by a divine agent, the dolphin, which enabled him to establish the city in accordance with a Delphic oracle. The story thus legitimizes Tarentum as a city founded with divine purpose and divine help.

A similar problem in distinguishing Taras from Phalanthus arises from Pausanias's description of a fifth-century ex-voto set up at Delphi by the Tarentines to commemorate their victory over the Peucetians.¹¹³ According to Pausanias, the sculpture represented the dead enemy king, a few Tarentine knights and warriors, Taras, Phalanthus the Lacedaemonian, and, near Phalanthus (οὐ πόρρω), a dolphin. Scholars have used this last fact to argue that the dolphin rider on the coinage of Tarentum is Phalanthus. However, the hero is *near* the dolphin, and not *on* it. Léon Lacroix argues that the dolphin on the sculpture described by Pausanias simply represents the city of Tarentum in this Delphic offering, just as, for instance, the celery represents Selinous in the Delphic offering from this city.¹¹⁴ Lacroix further points out that the legend about the shipwrecked founder—whether he is Taras or Phalanthus—seems to have been fabricated at Delphi to explain the presence of the dolphin on the Tarentine offering.¹¹⁵ It is indeed noteworthy that Pausanias narrates Phalanthus's shipwreck and rescue by a dolphin *after* describing the sculpture; he probably heard the story as an explanation for the monument.

Delphic Foundation Myths

The legend of Taras/Phalanthus's rescue by a dolphin is at home at Delphi by analogy with Delphic foundation myths. In the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, the Cretan sailors are brought to Delphi by Apollo in the guise of a dolphin to establish the sanctuary. In this myth, the role of the god in his dolphin form is to guide his future priests to the site of Delphi so that they can establish the sanctuary. The dolphin-Apollo is a guide and protector for the Cretan sailors and also an intermediary who indicates the divine will to men, much in the way dolphins act in the stories we have analyzed earlier in this chapter.

ὥς μὲν ἐγὼ τὸ πρῶτον ἐν ἡεροειδέϊ πόντῳ
εἰδόμενος δελφίνι θοῆς ἐπὶ νηὸς ὄρουσα,
ὥς ἐμοὶ εὐχέσθαι Δελφινίῳ: αὐτὰρ ὁ βωμὸς
αὐτὸς Δελφίνιος καὶ ἐπόψιος ἔσσεται αἰεὶ. (*Hymn. Hom. Ap.* 493–96)¹¹⁶

And as I first sprang upon the fast ship on the misty sea under the appearance of a dolphin, pray to me as Apollo Delphinus; the altar itself will also be called Delphinus and it will be forever conspicuous.

In this passage, we notice that the sea is the locus of Apollo's epiphany, just as it was the locus of Theseus's and Enalus's epiphany after their visit to the underwater palaces of the gods. As we have seen, the sea is appropriate to this function as an intermediary space between the realms of men and gods.¹¹⁷ We also notice the particular appropriateness of the epithet ἡεροειδέϊ "misty" in this context. As we have seen in [Chapter 1](#), the sea shares its misty character with the Ocean as well as the Underworld. Mist is a mix of air, water,

and earth that indicates a location at the junction between the different regions of the world.¹¹⁸ These associations emphasize that this passage of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* recounts a moment of exchange between mortals and immortals in which the divine will is expressed. The god enters the realm of men, the sailors become priests at his command, and the site of Delphi becomes a Panhellenic place of worship. Apollo's dolphin form represents the exchange between men and gods, as the dolphin was thought to be able to cross between the mortal and immortal realms.

An alternate version of the foundation myth of Delphi recounts that Icadius, son of Apollo and the Nymph Lycia, set out for Italy from his native country.¹¹⁹ He was shipwrecked on the way and brought to the site of Delphi by a dolphin. In memory of his rescuer, he named the sanctuary that he founded there "Delphi." The story is clearly an etiology for the name of the sanctuary, which was variously understood as meaning "dolphin" or "womb" in Antiquity. However, we note that in this version too, the role of the dolphin is to carry the founder to the location of the new sanctuary and thus to indicate the divine will and ensure the foundation of the temple. The change from Icadius's original destination—Italy—indicates that the divine will prevails over mortal plans, and that our destiny is unknown to us until it comes to pass.¹²⁰

It has been suggested that these Delphic foundation myths illustrate the divine personality of Apollo Delphinus as the patron of colonization and foundations.¹²¹ Indeed, Apollo, under his various invocations, and especially through the Delphic oracle, was strongly connected with colonization.¹²² His cult as Delphinus was spread widely around the Mediterranean throughout Antiquity,¹²³ and he was perhaps also connected with sailing.¹²⁴ However, two other aspects of Apollo Delphinus seem to have dominated his cult: (1) Delphinus was the patron of the central institutions of the polis, especially the justice system;¹²⁵ (2) Delphinus was also the protector of ephebes.¹²⁶

The first aspect of Delphinus is clearly illustrated in the myths we have studied so far in this section, since the stories focus on colonization and the establishment of new cities. The second aspect of Apollo Delphinus, the protection of ephebes, is particularly important for this discussion because of the myths of coming-of-age studied here. As a parallel, we can mention that Delphinus is deeply involved in the legend of Theseus, who is an archetype of the *kouros* or "youth" attaining manhood. Theseus dedicates the Marathonian Bull to Delphinus in his temple;¹²⁷ he was acquitted from the justified murders of Sinis and Procrustes in the Delphinion;¹²⁸ in a version where Theseus is the son of Aegeus, he is recognized by his father on the site of the future Delphinion;¹²⁹ when leaving for Crete, Theseus sacrifices to Delphinus, which became the *aition* for a later Athenian annual ritual.¹³⁰ Finally, outside of the legends surrounding Theseus, let us mention that contests of ephebes were held in honor of Delphinus at Aegina¹³¹ and Miletus.¹³² An epigram of Rhianus preserved in the *Greek Anthology* (6.278) attests to the function of Delphinus as protector of kouroi, at least in the Hellenistic period:

Παῖς Ἀσκληπιάδεω καλῶ καλὸν εἷσατο Φοῖβῳ
 Γόργος ἄφ' ἡμερτᾶς τοῦτο γέρας κεφαλᾶς.
 Φοῖβε, σὺ δ' ἵλαος, Δελφίνιε, κούρον ἀέξοις
 εὖμοιρον λευκὴν ἄχρις ἐφ' ἡλικίην.

Gorgus son of Asclepiades dedicates to beautiful Phoebus this beautiful gift from his charming head. Phoebus, be gracious, Delphinus, let the boy prosper in happiness until gray old age.

In this epigram, perhaps a fictive dedication, Gorgus son of Asclepiades dedicates his hair to Apollo Delphinus. The young man prays that the god will take pity on him and permit him to prosper and reach old age. Thus, the epigram presents Apollo as the patron of

young men who have not yet reached manhood. The favor of the god allows them to go through this delicate period and to become adults.

The *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* itself presents Delphinius as a kouros in transition toward adulthood.¹³³ Vilatte proposes that Apollo's disguise as a dolphin in the hymn marks his transition from boy to man.¹³⁴ Indeed, before his apparition to the Cretans, Apollo is still searching to establish his rights to the site of Delphi by killing Pytho and punishing Telphusa. In his dolphin form, he acquires authority, and gives orders to the frightened Cretans. Afterward, when he changes form again, he assumes a divine glow, and then the shape of an adult man (ἀνέρι εἰδόμενος).¹³⁵ Thus, the god is himself represented in the hymn as making the transition to adulthood while in a dolphin disguise. Earlier in this chapter, we have seen that the dolphin represents transitions between various states of existence, namely life, death, and the immortal realm. We now see that the dolphin can also represent the transition between different phases of life, namely adolescence and adulthood, a fact that may be alluded to in the stories of Enalus and Icadus.

Conversely, many dolphin stories of the Hellenistic and Roman periods present dolphin-riding ephebes whose transition to adulthood is cut short by death. The most famous of these tales is the dolphin story from Iasus in Caria, where a dolphin was tamed and struck a particular friendship with a beautiful ephebe named Hermias.¹³⁶ In fact, according to Aelian, the dolphin was in love with the boy. One day, while the boy and the dolphin were playing as accustomed, the dolphin accidentally killed the boy with its dorsal fin. Overcome by sadness, the animal brought the boy's body to shore and washed itself up beside him to die. Another popular story, told by Pliny, tells how a tame dolphin brought a boy to school every day from Baiae to Puteoli and back.¹³⁷ When the boy fell ill and died, the dolphin washed itself ashore to mourn him and finally died. Many other similar stories were told in Alexandria,¹³⁸ Hippo Diarrhytus (Bizerte in modern Tunisia),¹³⁹ Libya,¹⁴⁰ Ios,¹⁴¹ Amphilochoi (Cilicia),¹⁴² Achaea,¹⁴³ and Poroselene (a small island off the coast of Asia Minor).¹⁴⁴

Because all these stories emphasize love between a dolphin and a human boy, scholars have interpreted them as an offshoot of the widespread Hellenistic and Roman iconographical motif of Eros riding a dolphin.¹⁴⁵ Many have also tried to prove the reliability of these ancient tales by adducing modern examples of tame dolphins letting children ride their backs.¹⁴⁶ However, while the stories do emphasize the dolphin's naturally friendly disposition and while the popularity of dolphin-riding Erotes as an iconographical motif in this time period cannot be ignored, it is important to note that the central theme of these stories is death and that the main characters are always adolescent boys.¹⁴⁷ The stories also emphasize the dolphin's concern for burial since it brings the boy's body to shore for burial rather than leaving it in the sea. The fact that the dolphin itself dies in the stories indicates that the destinies of the boys and of the animals are inseparably connected. The death of the dolphins closely follows that of the boys and indicates that instead of transitioning to adulthood, the boys have transitioned to the afterlife—hence the dolphins' concern for the boys' burial. In these stories, the dead dolphins represent the boys' failure to come of age.



Figure 15. Attic red-figure hydria, Berlin Painter, 500–480 BC. Museo Gregoriano Etrusco. Photo credit: Scala / Art Resource NY.

Conclusion

The dolphin's mediating role thus parallels that of the sea itself, as it bridges between mortals, immortals, and the dead. This function of the dolphin is manifest in Greek iconography too, where dolphins often underscore moments of contact between the

different inhabitants of the cosmos. For instance, on the famous hydria of the Museo Gregoriano Etrusco,¹⁴⁸ Apollo flies over the sea in a winged tripod between two leaping dolphins (Fig. 15). The marvelous vehicle of the god in the upper register of the vase contrasts sharply with the completely ordinary fish and octopus that swim underwater at the bottom of the painting. By juxtaposing these two representations, the painter expressed the convergence of the mortal with the divine in the picture. Apollo makes his epiphany by descending from the sky to hover over the abyss of the sea, perhaps at the occasion of his annual voyage from Delphi to the land of the Hyperboreans.¹⁴⁹

In between the two extremes of sky and sea, we find the dolphins. They occupy the space immediately above the waves, a space conceptualized by the Greeks as an intermediary location between mortals and immortals.¹⁵⁰ The dolphins' mediating function is made clear by the graceful curves of their bodies, which provide a visual bridge to the divine figure above them. The composition strongly recalls Apollo's epiphany in the *Homer Hymn to Apollo*, where the god leaps out of the waves in the form of a dolphin.¹⁵¹ We are also reminded of Plutarch's description of Arion's fall into the sea (*Conv.* 161d): πρὶν δ' ὅλον καταδύναι τὸ σῶμα δελφίνων ὑποδραμόντων ἀναφέροντο: "before his entire body had sunk into the sea, dolphins came underneath him and he was carried upwards." Finally, dolphins leap in front of the chariots of the Dawn and the Sun during the daily epiphany of these gods, who come out of the Ocean to shine in the sky.¹⁵² In all cases, the dolphins appear exactly in between sky and sea and signal a moment of contact between men and gods.¹⁵³ For this reason, dolphins are rarely shown underwater. Rather, they jump out of the sea to represent the interaction of the worlds of mortals and immortals. As it has often been claimed, the dolphins represent the sea itself. They do not, however, simply emphasize or illustrate the marine context of a scene. Rather, on a deeper level, they act as intermediaries between different states of existence, a function they share with the sea.¹⁵⁴

CHAPTER 5

Diving occurs as a rash impulse in a deeply troubling situation. For instance, Euripides *Medea* 1287 uses πίπτει (a form of πίπτω “to fall, to throw down”) to describe Ino’s frenzied leap into the sea after she kills her children. In the *Cyclops* 164–74, the same tragedian uses *rhiptein* “to throw down” to describe Silenus’s drunken leap down from the Leucadian Rock, in which he imagines himself as mad with sexual desire. Anacreon fr. 31 (Page), uses *kolymban* “to dive” when a symposiast expresses the drunken feeling of falling in love as a leap into the sea from the Leucadian Rock. In a completely different context, Plato also uses *kolymban* when he writes in *Republic* 453d that undertaking a thorny and confusing debate over marriage and children is similar to a leap into the sea.⁸ Socrates then jokingly suggests, in a clear allusion to the story of Arion—another diver—that a dolphin or some other improbable means of salvation might rescue the debaters from the sea of trouble they will find themselves in.⁹ In all these cases, the divers are pictured casting themselves down under severe mental distress or delirium.

The mental turmoil experienced by the divers is so intense that it is often depicted as madness, even Dionysiac frenzy. In the *Cyclops* 164–74, Euripides uses *mainomai* “to be mad” twice in Silenus’s description of his love-fueled drunken leap down from the Leucadian Rock.¹⁰ Euripides also uses *mainomai* to describe Ino’s state of mind when she jumps into the sea (*Medea* 1284: Ἰνώ μανείσαν ἐκ θεῶν “Ino, mad by the will of the gods”). Aeschylus connects a leap into the sea with madness when Pelasgus tells the Danaids that they are in need of sound advice in the *Suppliants* 407–9:

δεῖ τοι βαθείας φροντίδος σωτηρίου,
 δίκην κολυμβητήρος, ἐς βυθὸν μολεῖν
 δεδορκὸς ὄμμα, μηδ’ ἄγαν ὦνόμενον

You need deep and salutary thinking, similar to a diver, going into the abyss with a keen eye, not overly intoxicated with wine.

In this passage, Aeschylus conflates the metaphor of diving into a troubling question (as in Pl. *Resp.* 453d) with the feeling of physical abandonment that accompanies drunkenness (similar to Anacreon fr. 31 Page). The double metaphor expresses the bewilderment provoked by the Danaids’ situation. The problem they face is as deep as the sea, and trying to disentangle the issue is like diving into the abyss. The apparently random mention of drunkenness finds its explanation in the context of performance of the play, the Dionysia, a festival where wine and its effects played an important role in tragedies, comedies, and satyr plays. Furthermore, drunkenness emphasizes the inability to think rationally, a feeling that is generated by the extreme difficulty of the Danaids’ situation and illustrated by the image of the diver (κολυμβητήρος). Diving represents a complete loss of mental control in the face of a reality that is beyond human understanding.¹¹ Divers literally plunge into madness, whether it is delightful or distressing, Dionysiac or not. The notions of immateriality and flying implied in the verbs used to describe diving emphasize that the physical gesture illustrates a mental process in which the soul violently leaps forward.

Crossing Cosmic Boundaries

Diving into the sea operates a passage away from the ordinary world into another state of consciousness. This is literally the case with the Leucadian Leap described by Euripides in the *Cyclops* 164–74 and Anacreon fr. 31 (Page). Indeed, Nagy points out that the White Rock (*Leukas Petrē*) marks the entrance to Hades in the *Odyssey* and is also the gateway to the land of dreams (*Od.* 24.11–12).¹² A dive from the White Rock thus represents a

passage into death or into another state of consciousness such as dreaming, madness, drunkenness, or love.

Because it prompts a radical break from normal life, the Leucadian Leap allows for renewal. In particular, the leap allows those who are mad with passion to stop their course and change their experience, either by falling into love and drunkenness like Anacreon and Silenus, or by jumping out of love like Sappho in Menander's *Leucadia* (Strab. 10.2.9):

Ἐχει δὲ τὸ τοῦ Λευκάτα Ἀπόλλωνος ἱερὸν καὶ τὸ ἄλμα τὸ τοὺς ἔρωτας
παύειν πεπιστευμένον· οὐ δὴ λέγεται πρώτη Σαπφῷ ὥς φησιν ὁ
Μένανδρος τὸν ὑπέρκομπον θηρώσα Φάων' οἰστρώντι πόθῳ ῥῖψαι
πέτρας ἀπὸ τηλεφανοῦς ἄλμα κατ' εὐχὴν σήν, δέσποτ' ἄναξ.

It features the temple of Apollo Leucatas and also the “leap” which was believed to end love. “This is where Sappho is said to have been the first,” according to Menander, “chasing the proud Phaon, goaded by desire, she threw herself down the far-seen cliff in a leap according to her vow to you, lord and king.”

For Menander, as well as in later traditions, the Leucadian Leap was performed from a high white cliff on the island of Leucas.¹³ It is unspecified whether our earlier sources, Anacreon and Euripides, locate the leap on this actual cliff or on the imaginary White Rock of the *Odyssey*. However, the circumstances and effects of the leap according to Menander are similar to those described by Euripides and Anacreon. Sappho violently throws herself down the Leucadian cliff (ῥῖψαι) goaded by desire (οἰστρώντι πόθῳ) for the indifferent Phaon. Her frenzy matches that of her predecessors, down to the verb used to describe her jump. In addition, the *oistros* “gadfly” which torments Sappho is frequently associated with madness, as in the myth of Io.¹⁴ The gadfly is also common in Dionysiac contexts, where it describes the halting and disorderly behavior of Maenads.¹⁵ Finally, according to Plato in *Phaedrus* 265b, love itself is a form of madness (ἐρωτικὴν μανίαν ἐφήσαμέν τε ἀρίστην εἶναι “we said that the madness of love is the best”). Sappho, like Silenus and Anacreon’s symposiast, dives down the cliff, mad with love, a frenzy that gives important Dionysiac overtones to the passage. As a result of her leap, Sappho forgets Phaon, just as Silenus forgets his misery by leaping down the cliff and into love (κακῶν λήσσις “forgetting of cares,” Eur. *Cyclops* 174).¹⁶ The leap, by changing the diver’s state of consciousness, allows for a mental renewal.¹⁷

As an etiology for this effect of the leap, Ptolemaios Chennos (a mythographer from the first century AD) recounts that when Aphrodite was desperately searching for her dead lover Adonis, she went to the temple of Apollo Erithios in Cypriote Argos.¹⁸ She consulted the god, who brought her to Leucas and instructed her to dive off the cliff. After doing so, Aphrodite’s love for Adonis ceased, and she asked Apollo the reason for this relief. The god answered that Leucas is the place where Zeus sits when he wants to be relieved of his love for Hera. Thus the Leucadian leap brings about an interruption in the state of one’s life—even for the gods—which allows for revitalization. Zeus, like the other divers at Leucas, experiences a mental change which frees him from passion. However, Zeus does not dive down from the cliff. As the chief Olympian, he neither dies nor visits the Underworld, and therefore does not cross the gate of Hades that is represented by the White Rock. As for Aphrodite, she dives for love of a dead man. She plunges toward death and emerges renewed from the experience. In fact, the story recalls the rites performed in honor of Adonis, which emphasize the alternation between life and death. Women waited for Adonis and planted temporary gardens which were eventually thrown into water.¹⁹ In myth, Adonis went back and forth between his two lovers Persephone and Aphrodite, and therefore between life and death.²⁰

Not only the White Rock, but any height from which one leaps down can evoke a dive into death.²¹ In the Homeric epics, fallen warriors are said to dive, face down, and crash into the dust. For instance, Epicles falls down from the walls of Troy when Ajax hits him with a stone (*Il.* 12.385–86): ὁ δ' ἄρ' ἄρνευτήρι ἐοικὼς κάππεσ' ἄφ' ὑψηλοῦ πύργου, λίπε δ' ὅστέα θυμός “like a diver he fell from the high wall, and his spirit left his bones.”²² The exact same formulation appears in *Il.* 16.742–43 (Cebriion is hit with a stone by Patroclus) and *Od.* 12.413–14 (the *pi* lot of Odysseus’s ship is hit on the head by the falling mast). We note the use of the verb καταπίπτω “to fall down,” a compound form of *piptein*, which, as we have seen, is common in descriptions of leaps into the sea and evokes both falling and flying. The movement of the dying warrior’s body illustrates the flight of his immaterial soul into the afterlife. This distinction between the physical and immaterial parts of the warrior is emphasized by the contrast between ὅστέα “bones” and θυμός “spirit.”

The word used to compare warriors to divers is the relatively rare term ἄρνευτήρ. Eustathius in his commentary to the *Iliad* 3.409.1–3 (Van der Valk) explains the meaning of the word in the *Iliad* 12.385–86 (the death of Epicles) as follows:

Ἀρνευτήρα δὲ λέγει τὸν κυβιστητήρα, ὡς καὶ ἀλλαχοῦ, παρὰ τοῦς ἄρνας, οἱ ἐν τῷ προῖεναι ὥσανει κυβιστῶσι τὸν ἄερα κυρίττοντες. “Ἐτεροι δὲ τὸν δελφινά φασιν ἄρνευτήρα, ὁ γὰρ ἄρρην δελφίς ἐπὶ κεφαλῇν, φασίν, ἵεται γαλήνης οὐσης.

He calls an acrobat a diver (*arneutēr*), as also appears elsewhere, by comparison with lambs (*arnas*), which as they walk forward, perform acrobatics, as it were, jumping in the air. Others say that the dolphin is a diver, since indeed the male (*arrên*) dolphin, as they say, springs headfirst when the sea is calm.

As explained by Eustathius, the metaphor used to describe Epicles’ death is that he plunges headfirst, either like an acrobat or like a dolphin diving into the sea. This last comparison is particularly significant in a death scene, since we have seen in [Chapter 4](#) that the dolphin is a psychopompic animal that brings souls to rest in Hades. The dolphin is also the animal that rescues distressed divers. As evoked by Socrates in Plato’s *Republic* 453d, the animal famously carries Arion through death and back (Hdt. 1.24; see [Chapter 4](#)). The death of Epicles is therefore compared to a leap into Hades during which his body flies off the wall in an arching motion in the manner of an acrobat or a dolphin.²³

The word ἄρνευτήρ “diver” appears in the Homeric epics only to describe death scenes in which a warrior falls from a height.²⁴ Outside of the Homeric epics, the word is rare but it is used in similar contexts.²⁵ In astronomical literature, the word ἄρνευτήρ “diver” describes the revolutions of the constellation Cassiopeia (Eudoxus fr. 90, 14 Lasserre = Aratus *Phaenomena* 1.656): ἀλλ’ ἤγ’ ἐς κεφαλῇν ἴση δύετ’ ἄρνευτήρι μειρομένη γονάτων “but she plunges headfirst like a diver, with her knees apart.” Aratus’s description suggests that the movement of celestial bodies is similar to a dive. The word he uses (ἄρνευτήρ) evokes death because of its specific use in the Homeric epics. However, much like the dives at Leucas, the daily death of the constellation is followed by renewal, as the stars dive into the Ocean and resurface every day.²⁶ This association brings to mind the famous krater of the Sun, Moon, and Stars ([Fig. 16](#)).²⁷ On the krater, Helios rides his chariot up into the sky while Selene retreats and the Stars, personified as young men, dive into the Ocean from a rock. The image represents the alternation of night and day, and the stars’ revolutions are illustrated as a leap into the Ocean from a rock—perhaps the White Rock itself. Greek culture thus draws a direct parallel between the daily disappearance of celestial bodies and the disappearance of mortals when they die.²⁸ Death is a plunge in the Ocean at the end of the cycle of life.



Figure 16. Red-figure krater, ca. 430 BC. London, British Museum, E466. Photo: © The Trustees of the British Museum.

The cosmological and eschatological notions attached to diving are further illustrated in the traditions concerning the death of the Hyperboreans. Pliny 4.89 and Pomponius Mela 3.31–33 report that the Hyperboreans, when they are satisfied with their happy life of continual banqueting, crown themselves with garlands and dive into the sea from a certain rock (*ex certa rupe, e quadam rupe* “from some rock”).²⁹ Both Pliny and Mela specify that the Hyperboreans live at the northernmost edge of the world, where the orbit of the stars reaches its farthest point (*sub ipso siderum cardine* “under the very hinge of the stars,” *cardines mundi extremique siderum ambitus* “the hinges of the world and the farthest point of the orbit of the stars”). The Hyperboreans’ dive can thus be understood as a literal illustration of the passage to the afterlife, where mortals cross the physical and ontological boundaries that delimit the earth, the sky, and the sea at the very edge of the world. Considering the location of the Hyperboreans’ country at the extremities of the earth, the rock they dive from may very well be the White Rock that stands at the entrance of Hades.

From this rock, the Hyperboreans’ dive brings them directly into Hades.³⁰ Mela 3.33 calls the leap *funus eximium* “an excellent funeral rite,” and Pliny 4.89 writes *hoc genus*

sepulturae beatissimum “this is the most blessed form of burial.” The unequivocal chthonian significance of the words *funus* and *sepultura* shows that the leap actually brings the Hyperboreans under the earth. Such a conception emphasizes the circular trajectory accomplished by the divers, as they fly around the earth and through the sea in their plunge and end up in the Underworld. This conception already appears in the *Odyssey* 20.61–65, when Penelope wishes to be whisked away by a gust of wind and plunge (βάλοι) into the Ocean.³¹ A few lines later, *Odyssey* 20.80–81, Penelope imagines this process to bring her under the earth. A dive thus bridges between earth, sky, and sea, and allows a direct transition between the surface and the Underworld.

The immediacy of the Hyperboreans’ transition to the afterlife by means of a dive explains why both Pliny and Mela call the Hyperboreans’ death “the best possible kind of burial.” Indeed, this manner of death, in which the deceased dive into the afterlife from the very boundary of Hades, trumps the need for burial rites. Funerary rituals are a means of mediation between life and death that allow the deceased to enter Hades. The rituals are meant to appease the soul of the dead, purify the pollution that they leave behind, and channel the grief of the family. However, Pliny and Mela, as well as numerous other authors, state that the Hyperboreans know no disease or strife and that they grow old happily while surrounded with every luxury.³² They choose the moment of their death and welcome it, since it happens at a time when they feel fully satisfied with life.³³ For these reasons, the soul of the Hyperboreans needs no appeasement, their death incurs no pollution because no corpse is left behind,³⁴ and their departure causes no grief. Finally, the Hyperboreans experience no fear or mental turmoil as they die. According to Mela, they leap happily, crowned with garlands (Mela 3.32: *hilares redimiti sertis*). This ideal end to an ideal life is meant as foil for the lives and deaths of ordinary mortals, whose dives are, as we have seen, always characterized by distress, madness, or delirium. For ordinary mortals, the rush of diving represents the fear and turmoil that agitate the soul at the moment of death, as men plunge into the unknown.³⁵

Desire, Diving, and Death

In keeping with these traditions, Hellenistic and later poets use the motif of a leap into the sea to illustrate the emotional turmoil, death, and renewal that accompany unsuccessful love chases. Apriate, pursued by the hero Trambelus, throws herself into the sea (ἐαυτὴν ῥίψαι) and dies in the shallows.³⁶ Boline, a girl from Achaea, is pursued by Apollo. She leaps into the sea (ἀφείναι θάλασσαν αὐτήν) and becomes immortal by the grace of the god.³⁷ Finally, the Cretan Britomartis flees from the love-crazed Minos (Call. *Hymn to Artemis* 189: ποιηθεῖς ὑπ’ ἔρωτι “distracted with love”).³⁸ After a nine-month chase, exhausted and cornered, she throws herself into the sea (Paus. 2.30.3: ἐρριψεν ἐαυτὴν “she threw herself”), where she lands in some fishing nets and becomes Dictynna (“the Lady of the Net”). In Pausanias’s version, Britomartis is transformed into a goddess by Artemis and receives a cult on Crete as well as on Aegina under the name Aphaia “She who disappears.”

In all these stories, the violence of the pursuer’s desire and the equally violent rejection from the pursued ends with a leap into the sea as an expression of the deranged state of mind of both protagonists. The leap resolves the conflict by placing the object of desire forever out of reach and assuaging her distress. In the case of Britomartis, the leap into the sea ends her mortal life while allowing her to live on in the invisible world of the gods, a transition that is made clear by her new name “Aphaia.” Through death, she experiences a change in consciousness as she becomes an immortal and invisible goddess. Similarly, Boline is made immortal and Apriate is remembered for her death, which is a

certain form of immortality. It is noteworthy that none of these girls leave their mortal body behind (the name “Aphaia” indicates a sudden disappearance). This pollution-free death removes the girls suddenly and completely from the world while leaving open the possibility of their survival in a different state of existence.

But what do love chases represent, and why do they often conclude with a leap into the sea? Sourvinou-Inwood and Dowden have established that love chases in Greek mythology correspond to stories of marriage, sometimes group marriage, as in the case of the Proetids.³⁹ Furthermore, Sourvinou-Inwood stresses the connections of male coming-of-age with hunting and racing, as well as the common metaphor according to which unmarried girls are wild animals: to marry is to catch and tame an animalistic young girl who then becomes a bride.⁴⁰ Commenting on myths in which maidens escape from the chase, in particular the story of Daphne, Dowden proposes that the maidens in these myths exclude themselves from the human community by refusing sexuality and marriage.⁴¹ In Daphne’s case, her metamorphosis into a laurel tree to elude Apollo’s relentless chase represents this exclusion. If we apply Dowden’s conclusions to the unsuccessful love chases mentioned above, we understand that the leap into the sea removes the girls from society and breaks all their bonds with the community.⁴² Leaping into the sea is thus a double-edged weapon, as the girls certainly escape their pursuers, but they remain virgins forever and never integrate the community as married women.⁴³ For this reason, it is appropriate to find Aphaia associated with Artemis, an eternal virgin who is nonetheless preoccupied with the transition to marriage.⁴⁴

In our myths, the sea is an impassable barrier that the girls put up between themselves and their pursuers as a refusal of marriage. This function of the sea contrasts sharply with other instances where a pursuit or erotic story ends with an immersion. We have seen in the story of Danae that water, in particular underground fresh water, can represent fertility and a nuptial bath (see [Chapter 3](#)).⁴⁵ Dowden has also stressed this significance of water in the myth of the Proetids.⁴⁶ He interprets Melampous’s final purification of the Proetids in a spring or river as an evocation of nuptial bathing rituals, which prepare maidens to welcome their new husbands and transition to womanhood. Fresh water is thus opposed to seawater, since the former promotes fertility and the latter ensures eternal sterility as a virgin, forever unmarried.⁴⁷

Moschus fr. 3 (Gow) exploits this contrast between salt and fresh water and reworks the traditional motif of the love chase when he describes the union of Alpheius and Arethusa by means of a leap into the sea:

Ἀλφειὸς μετὰ Πῖσαν ἐπὶ πόντον ὁδεύη,
ἔρχεται εἰς Ἀρέθοισαν ἄγων κοτινηφόρον ὕδωρ,
ἔδνα φέρων καλὰ φύλλα καὶ ἄνθηα καὶ κόνιν ἱράν,
καὶ βαθὺς ἐμβαίνει τοῖς κύμασι τὰν δὲ θάλασσαν
νέρθεν ὑποτροχάει, κοῦ μίγνυται ὕδασιν ὕδωρ,
ἀδ' οὐκ οἶδε θάλασσα διερχομένω ποταμοῖο.
κῶρος δεινοθέτας κακομάχανος αἰνὰ διδάσκων
καὶ ποταμὸν διὰ φίλτρον Ἔρως ἐδίδαξε κολυμβῆν.

When Alpheius makes his way under the sea from Pisa, he comes to Arethusa, driving the water that makes the wild olives grow, and bearing marriage gifts of beautiful leaves and flowers and sacred dust, and he walks deep under the waves and runs under the sea, and he does not mingle his water with the brine, and the sea does not know that the river is passing through. That scheming boy, teacher of mischief, Eros, taught a river to dive with a spell.

In this poem, the nymph Arethusa has already fled beyond the sea by the grace of

Artemis to escape the pursuing river Alpheius.⁴⁸ Undeterred, Alpheius plunges (κολυμβῆν) under the sea without mixing his own water with it (κοῦ μίγνυται ὕδασιν ὕδωρ). Moschus subtly conveys that Alpheius manages to catch Arethusa by bringing his own fertile fresh water to her (ἐρχεται εἰς Ἀρέθουσιν ἄγων κοτινηφόρον ὕδωρ) through the sterile salt water of the sea. Alpheius and Arethusa's marriage is suggested by the word ἔδνα "marriage gifts" and by the tradition according to which underground tunnels physically connected the Peloponnesian river Alpheius with the spring Arethusa in Sicily.⁴⁹ Such a connection evokes the couple's physical union. The closure of the poem, in typical Hellenistic fashion, presents Eros as a mischievous boy (κῶρος δεινοθέτας κακομάχανος) and evokes love magic (διὰ φίλτρον). The last word, κολυμβῆν "to dive," emphasizes the unexpected result of Alpheius and Arethusa's respective dives, which is marriage.

Alpheius's successful dive for Arethusa contrasts with Polyphemos's pathetic attempt at catching the nimble Galatea. Posidippus fr. 19.7–8 (Austin-Bastianini) writes:

οὐκ ἄν μιν Πολύφημος ἐβάστασε, σὺν Γαλατεΐᾳ
πυκνὰ κολυμβήσας αἰπολικὸς δύσερως·

Polyphemos could not have lifted it, the love-sick goatherd who often dived with Galatea (trans. Hunter)

The image of the clumsy Cyclops attempting to swim and dive reveals his all-consuming desire, as he pursues a passion that is fated to be unsuccessful. In fact, Theocritus in the roughly contemporary *Idyll* 11.10–11 calls Polyphemos's love by the name of madness: ἦρατο δ' οὐ μάλοις οὐδὲ ρόδῳ οὐδὲ κικίννοις, ἀλλ' ὀρθαῖς μανίαις "he did not love with apples, roses, or locks of hair, but with utter madness."⁵⁰ Polyphemos's dives are an expression of a deranged state of mind, since Galatea's very nature as a sea-nymph marks her as unattainable for a Cyclops. Nonetheless, Polyphemos pleads desperately for her to come out of the sea to consort with him in his cave: τὰν γλαυκὰν δὲ θάλασσαν ἔα ποτὶ χέρσον ὀρεχθεῖν. ἄδιον ἐν τῶντρῳ παρ' ἐμὶν τὰν νύκτα διαξεῖς "leave the gray sea pounding on the beach. You will spend the night pleasantly with me in my cave" (Theoc. 11.44–45). On the one hand, Theocritus makes it clear that the sea is an impassable obstacle to love. On the other hand, he stresses that the ground, in fact the underground location of Polyphemos's cave, is appropriate for sexual activity (cf. Danae's underground prison becoming a bridal chamber, [Chapter 3](#)). The fastness of the ground supports stable unions, while the vast and indefinite space of the sea impedes social and marital bonds.⁵¹

Because the sea is an obstacle to matrimony, a leap into the sea before marriage illustrates a young woman's unrealized erotic potential, as in the story of Parthenos and Molpadia. These girls are the daughters of Staphylus and the sisters of Rhoeo (on Rhoeo, see [Chapter 3](#)).⁵² Parthenos and Molpadia fall asleep while they are guarding Staphylus's wine, at the moment when Staphylus has just discovered the beverage. Swine come in and break the wine jars. When Parthenos and Molpadia realize what happened, they are terrified at the thought of their father's anger. They run to the sea and throw themselves into the water from high rocks (ἐκ αὐτὰς ῥίψαι). Apollo, out of respect for Rhoeo, takes the girls up and establishes them in heroic cults.⁵³ Parthenos receives a cult in Boubastos on the Chersonese, while Molpadia takes the name of Hemithea and receives a cult in Kastabos.⁵⁴ Hemithea becomes famous for helping all humanity: she cures the sick and eases women's labor. Like Aphaia, Parthenos and Hemithea disappear from the world before they can attain womanhood. Like Aphaia's patron divinity Artemis, they are preoccupied with women's issues although they are eternal virgins (Parthenos means "the Virgin"). Finally, also like Aphaia, their leap into the sea ends their lives prematurely, but allows their physical disappearance and entry into the world of the gods, a transition that

is particularly emphasized by the name of Hemithea, “the half-goddess.” Their leap into the sea prompts a physical and psychological change, as they attain immortality and a new level of consciousness.

In the story, Staphylus causes his daughters’ disappearance instead of being the agent of their marriage, which should be his duty according to the conventions of Greek society. As the son of Dionysus, Staphylus represents two important aspects of the god.⁵⁵ On the one hand, Staphylus’s uncontrolled anger and violence spur his daughters to dive into the sea, which strongly recalls the associations between Dionysus, violence, and *mania* (cf. Dionysus’s own dive for fear of Lycurgus’ violence, *Il.* 6.123–43). On the other hand, as the inventor of viticulture and of the custom of mixing wine with water,⁵⁶ Staphylus provides the abandonment of drunkenness, just like Dionysus himself. This aspect of the story is particularly important in the version reported by Parthenius in *Love Stories* 1. According to Parthenius, a man named Lyrus of Nicaenetus had no children with his wife and went to inquire about it at Didyma. The oracle responded that he would have a child with the first woman he would encounter on his way home. On his return journey, Lyrus was Staphylus’s guest in Boubastos. Staphylus was aware of the oracle delivered to Lyrus and he desired grandchildren. Therefore, Staphylus ensured that Lyrus became drunk and slept with Hemithea. Lyrus was angry when he discovered the plot, but he nevertheless gave his belt to Hemithea as a token of recognition for the future child. Years later, Hemithea’s son Basilus went to find Lyrus in Nicaenetus and became the ruler of his father’s kingdom. In this version of the story, Staphylus embodies some rather disquieting aspects of Dionysus as he uses wine to intoxicate and deceive his guest, as well as subvert his daughter’s marriage.

In this version as in the one reported by Diodorus, Hemithea never marries. She remains a parthenos although she is a mother, much in the way Danae does, who is also prevented from marrying by her own father (see [Chapter 3](#)). In both cases, the father’s shirking of his duty stems from questions of inheritance. Neither Hemithea nor Danae has brothers, and the family dynamics are upended. Acrisius attempts to resolve the issue by preventing Danae from marrying so as to keep the estate within the patriarchal line. Staphylus aims to have a fatherless grandson by forcing his daughter to become pregnant out of wedlock. Thus Hemithea, like Danae, never realizes her full potential as a woman, since she never marries or integrates society as a proper matron.

Metamorphosis into Aquatic Birds

Matrimonial failure is essentially a disappearance from the community, as there is no established place for single adults in the ideal Greek social organization. We have seen that a leap into the sea illustrates such a disappearance: the protagonists vanish without a trace. They are believed to continue living in an intermediary space, not quite dead but separated from other humans. This in-between existence is often depicted as a metamorphosis into marine birds, because these animals literally live in between earth, sky, and sea.

Asteria “the Star” embodies such an intermediary station. She is a sky divinity, the daughter of Coeus and Phoebe and therefore sister of Leto. Relentlessly pursued by Zeus, Asteria transforms herself into a quail and leaps into the sea.⁵⁷ Finally, Asteria becomes the sacred island of Delos after having abandoned her bird shape. She transitions from a celestial body into a flying bird, and finally into a piece of earth which floats on the sea (Delos was a floating island before receiving Leto).⁵⁸ This unsteady position reflects Asteria’s refusal of sexuality. She remains on the margins of society, and therefore has no fixed place. Even as a quail, Asteria lives a transient existence: these birds migrate from

Africa to Europe every year and were frequently seen resting on passing ships.⁵⁹ The quails thus disappear every fall to return in the spring, much like Asteria, who disappears from the sky to reappear in the sea. Asteria's metamorphosis into a quail also emphasizes her unrealized erotic potential. The quail frequently appears in domestic scenes in association with women,⁶⁰ and is a common love present.⁶¹ The famous sixth-century Kore of Miletus holds a quail in her arms as a pet or perhaps as a sign of her blooming attractiveness.⁶²

Similarly, Alcyone and Ceyx cross between the elements and are transformed into birds as an illustration of their lost love. The couple's matrimonial happiness is shattered when Ceyx dies in a shipwreck.⁶³ Desperate and lonely, Alcyone throws herself into the sea, and the pair is metamorphosed into halcyons. The halcyon is a species of marine bird identified with the kingfisher, an appropriate bird to represent Alcyone and Ceyx's love since it is notoriously monogamous.⁶⁴ In Antiquity, kingfishers were believed to rear their young on floating nests during a period of calm at sea in winter called "the Halcyon Days."⁶⁵ The floating nest reflects Alcyone and Ceyx's situation: their life as a couple and as a part of society has ended, and they have no fixed home. Their intermediary station between earth, sky, and sea is made clear by the astral associations of the story. Ceyx is the son of the Morning Star,⁶⁶ and Alcyone is one of the Pleiades.⁶⁷ In Antiquity, the rising and setting of the Pleiades was used to determine the beginning and end of winter.⁶⁸ As a couple, Alcyone and Ceyx thus evoke the cycle of night and day, the cycle of the seasons, and the cycle of life and death. Their break with the world resolves their sorrow. Alcman and Simonides write that halcyons sing melodiously, are holy, and are free from cares.⁶⁹ The calm at sea that is granted them to raise their young also indicates a moment of release from trouble and deadly dangers, a respite that Alcyone and Ceyx obtain through their death.

Unfulfilled love and longing is also the reason why Aesacus is metamorphosed into a duck. This son of Priam and Alexirrhoe is in love with the nymph Hesperia.⁷⁰ He chases her, and she, terrified, runs away from him. In her frenzy, she steps on a snake and soon dies.⁷¹ Desperate, Aesacus throws himself into the sea from a steep rock. Tethys pities him and turns him into a duck, but Aesacus keeps trying to kill himself by diving into the sea. As a result, the *mergus* "diver" duck is known for its habit of diving repeatedly beneath the water.⁷² In this story too, the dive is associated with the cycle of the cosmos. Aesacus's beloved is Hesperia "the Evening Sky," the nymph of the west. As we saw in [Chapter 1](#), the west is associated with the sunset and with death. The White Rock and Hades are located in the western Ocean, as well as the island of the Hesperides, the guardians of immortality. By diving into the sea for Hesperia, Aesacus leaps into the sunset, and thus into death and the afterlife. His metamorphosis into a duck emphasizes his physical as well as his psychological transition.

Such transitions are suggested by the very nature of aquatic birds: they have amphibious living habits and they disappear and reappear in the course of their yearly migrations. They thus constantly transition between elements and are an apt image to represent psychological transitions. Moreover, flying evokes weightlessness and a journey across cosmic boundaries, as when Hermes crosses between the worlds of mortals, immortals, and the dead with his winged sandals.⁷³ As Plato explains in *Phaedrus* 246d–e, the human soul itself is winged. The wings are the part of the mortal body that most participates of the divine because wings bring the soul up to the sky to enjoy divine sights. Thus, the brief moment of flight experienced by divers can be seen as a movement of the soul, which launches itself up into the sky and then plunges down into the sea. The entire process is captured metaphorically as a metamorphosis into an aquatic bird and expresses the notion of a spiritual journey.

In fact, aquatic birds often appear in funerary iconography as a representation of the

soul's journey to the afterlife.⁷⁴ Aquatic birds stand under the funerary bed on the Dipylon amphora.⁷⁵ On an Attic Geometric krater depicting a funerary procession, the birds appear among the mourners and on the funerary chariot.⁷⁶ On a large series of Attic white-ground lekythoi, ducks and birds are given as funerary offerings or are held by the dead embarking in Charon's boat.⁷⁷ On many other vases, cranes and herons attend while mourners honor a funerary stele.⁷⁸ In mythology, the dead companions of Achilles,⁷⁹ Diomedes,⁸⁰ and Memnon are metamorphosed into aquatic birds,⁸¹ and they stand guard eternally at the resting place of their leaders. The mournful cries of the birds of Diomedes earned them the name of "souls of the damned,"⁸² and the birds of Memnon were known as ἀντίψυχοι "trade-ins for souls."⁸³ In all three cases, the tombs are located in remote areas and surrounded by the sea as an indication of their separation from the land of the living.⁸⁴ The tomb of Diomedes is on a desolate island off the coast of Apulia, and the tomb of Memnon is on the shore of the Hellespont. The tomb of Achilles is on the island of Leukê "the White Island" at the mouth of the Black Sea.⁸⁵ The White Island seems to be the eastern counterpart of the White Rock as the gateway to the land of the dead. The ghosts of Achilles, Patroclus, Ajax, Antilochus, Medea, Helen, and Iphigeneia live there.⁸⁶ Sailors who pass the White Island during the daytime can hear the clash of weapons, and by night, they hear the sounds of joyful banqueting.⁸⁷ The presence of aquatic birds on such a ghost island emphasizes their ability to live in the intermediary space between life and death, between the visible and the invisible worlds.⁸⁸

In addition to their funerary and eschatological significance, aquatic birds are associated with women and eroticism, which explains their prevalence in love stories involving females.⁸⁹ Dowden points out that iconography often associates domestic and erotic scenes with long-legged aquatic birds such as cranes and herons, as well as stouter ducks and quails. The animals appear as pets on women's laps or as lover's gifts.⁹⁰ Analyzing the Arcadian myth of the Stymphalian Birds killed by Heracles, Dowden notes that statues of maidens with long birds' legs stood behind the temple of Stymphalian Artemis.⁹¹ In the myth, the Stymphalian birds fled out of the forest from a pack of wolves and came to live at the sanctuary of Artemis near a lake. Knowing that wolves in Arcadian myth and ritual symbolize young men undergoing rites of passage to adulthood, Dowden suggests that this myth is similar to that of the Proetids: a group of maidens flees from a group of young men. The location of the myth in the Arcadian wilderness near the sanctuary of Artemis, a virgin goddess, only reinforces this interpretation by stressing the wild nature of the maidens and their refusal of sexuality. The data collected by Bevan on bird dedications in Greek sanctuaries support Dowden's interpretation. Bevan demonstrates that, while bird figurines were offered to both male and female divinities, they were offered in preference to virgin female deities such as Athena, Aphaia, and Artemis.⁹² Other animal figurines such as horses are scarce in the sanctuaries of female virgin deities, but far outnumber bird figurines in sanctuaries dedicated to male deities.⁹³

Penelope herself, Dowden continues, is named after a duck, the πηνέλοψ (a wild duck or goose)⁹⁴ because she was saved from death by this bird when her parents threw her into the sea to avenge the death of Palamedes.⁹⁵ The woman who later becomes the object of the suitors' desire is thus identified as an aquatic bird, and her name supports her reputation for attractiveness. Yet, Penelope will submit to no intercourse with the suitors and ends up causing their death. She even has a dream in which her geese are mangled by the eagle Odysseus (*Od.* 535–70), which shows that despite the desire Penelope generates, she will not engage in sexual activity with the suitors. Penelope's name thus evokes her own attractiveness as well as the suitors' desire and their demise, all associations which are consistent with other love stories featuring aquatic birds. Furthermore, Penelope's name emphasizes her unsettled matrimonial situation as she waits at home for an absent

husband. Just as Odysseus is lost in the undefined space of the sea, not quite alive but not quite dead, so too Penelope is lost in the social structure of Ithaca, not quite married but not quite single. As in the case of other figures metamorphosed into aquatic birds, Penelope's duck name emphasizes that she is at the center of a contradictory nexus of death and desire, marriage and maidenhood.

Ino-Leucothea: The Shearwater Goddess

Another unsettled marital situation prompts Ino-Leucothea's metamorphosis into a shearwater (a large marine duck).⁹⁶ Ino is the second wife of Athamas, and is therefore the stepmother of Phrixus and Helle, the children of Athamas's first wife Nephele. As a typical Greek stepmother, Ino wants to kill Phrixus and Helle to ensure her own children's preeminence.⁹⁷ Alternatively, Ino plans the killing because she is in love with Phrixus.⁹⁸ Either way, Ino represents a major perturbation in the dynamics of the nuclear family. To accomplish her crime, she persuades the women of Thebes to parch the grain which had been saved for sowing. When the crop fails, Ino contrives for the messengers sent to Delphi to come back with an oracle ordering that Phrixus be sacrificed.⁹⁹ Nephele sends a golden ram to Thebes to rescue Phrixus and Helle. The children are brought to Colchis by the flying ram, but Helle falls into the sea on the way and gives her name to the Hellespont. Phrixus hangs on, and once arrived in Colchis, he is honored by Aeetes, who gives him his daughter in marriage in exchange for the sacrifice of the golden ram to Zeus. After all this, and seeing the utter ruin of her plans, Ino jumps into the sea where she becomes the goddess Leucothea.

Ino is a dangerous enemy for the family and the community. She threatens both the natural and human cycles by parching the grain and attempting to kill the royal children. Her departure through a leap into the sea is a welcome relief for the Thebans and recalls the precipitation of scapegoats into the sea which was practiced at Leucas and elsewhere in Greece. As indicated in [Chapter 1](#), such rituals were intended to promote the fertility of the soil by staging the rejection of an undesirable individual who was carrying symbols of sterility.¹⁰⁰ The scapegoat is literally thrown off the earth into the sterile depths of the sea and forbidden to ever return. Similarly, Ino's dive into the sea marks the end of sterility and the return of fertility for the land of Thebes. The royal line is also preserved, as Phrixus marries the daughter of Aeetes, and in some sources the sons of Phrixus return to Boeotia to reclaim their lost kingdom, an outcome that emphasizes the community's recovery from this experience.¹⁰¹

Ino leaves the community of mortals forever by dying in the sea. Perhaps as early as the sixth century, funeral dirges were sung and sacrifices were offered to commemorate her death.¹⁰² Yet Ino's life does not end. She becomes the immortal goddess Leucothea who rescues Odysseus when he is just about to drown (*Od.* 5. 333–55).¹⁰³ In the shape of a shearwater, Leucothea flies out of the sea to give Odysseus her veil, a magical item that allows him to reach the land of the Phaeacians safely.¹⁰⁴ Odysseus's experience thus mirrors Ino's own. Like her, he escapes suffering through an experience of death which ends in salvation.¹⁰⁵ Leucothea's duck shape emphasizes that she has passed through death and is now beyond the mortal condition. Perhaps for this reason, shearwaters are said to be the last witnesses of the death of drowning sailors in three poems of the *Greek Anthology* and in Callimachus's Epigram 58 (Pfeiffer).¹⁰⁶ The birds signal death, but they also symbolize a passage beyond death, to the afterlife or even to immortality.

Along with Ino's immortality comes a radical mental change. Her wickedness is replaced by benevolence and sympathy for mortals in distress. In the *Odyssey*, we are told that Ino-Leucothea takes pity on Odysseus because he is lost at sea and suffering

(ἐλέησεν ἀλώμενον, ἄλγε' ἔχοντα, *Od.* 5.336). Similarly, sailors pray to Leucothea during storms and at the outset of navigation.¹⁰⁷ A votive inscription from the theater of Athens calls her the Savior, the Harbor-Goddess.¹⁰⁸ In the Samothracian Mysteries, Ino's veil was a symbol of salvation that mimicked Odysseus's rescue.¹⁰⁹ Ino's leap into the sea, by taking her through death and into the divine sphere, operates a complete renewal that transforms the villain into a savior.

The second version of the myth of Ino also emphasizes death and renewal. In this version, Ino nurses Dionysus after the death of her sister Semele.¹¹⁰ This second version shares many characteristics with the first one, especially the focus on children and the family. Indeed, by nursing Zeus's illegitimate child, Ino subverts the dynamics of the divine family and incurs Hera's wrath. The goddess sends madness to Ino and Athamas as punishment for their protection of Dionysus. As a result, Athamas mistakes his eldest son Learchus for a deer and shoots him with an arrow. Ino, clasping her second child Melicertes in her arms, leaps into the sea.¹¹¹ In several sources, Ino, in her madness, kills Melicertes and sometimes Learchus too by boiling them in a cauldron, and then leaps into the sea with Melicertes.¹¹² She becomes the immortal goddess Leucothea and joins the company of the Nereids, while Melicertes receives heroic honors at the Isthmus (see [Chapter 4](#)).¹¹³ In this version of the myth, both the mortal and the immortal families are in turmoil due to Ino's actions. Just as in the first version of the myth, Ino's leap into the sea resolves the conflict and brings closure after unspeakable crimes have been committed against innocent children.

Ino's crime against her sons finds a close parallel in the figure of Medea, the witch of Colchis, who murdered her children because she was jealous of her husband's new wife. In Euripides' tragedy, Medea compares herself to Ino and laments: ὦ γυναικῶν λέχος πολύπονον, ὅσα βροτοῖς ἔρεξας ἤδη κακὰ "bed of women full of pain, how many ills have you caused for mortals!" (Eur. *Medea* 1282–91). Euripides makes it clear that both Ino and Medea's "beds," namely their marital situations, were the cause of their crimes. Euripides follows the Dionysiac version of the myth of Ino, so perhaps he means that Semele's illegitimate affair with Zeus ultimately caused Ino's crime. Aristotle also associates Ino with Medea when he gives Ino as an example regarding one topic in the *Rhetoric* and in the paragraph immediately following, gives Medea as an example of a different topic. Perhaps Aristotle's train of thought was following Euripides' tragedy. Finally Philostratus *Heroicus* 740.17 (Olearius), indicates that the rites performed to appease the soul of Ino's son Melicertes are the same as those performed for the children of Medea. Overall, Ino and Medea's crimes are perceived as equivalent not only because the little victims are similar, but also because of the motivations. Both set of murders, which illustrate a horrid subversion of motherhood, stem from troubled family dynamics.¹¹⁴ In both cases, the solution is to utterly remove the perpetrator from the community. Medea disappears into the sky on a chariot pulled by dragons and Ino leaps into the sea.¹¹⁵ Both women's crimes are too dangerous for them to remain in the community in any way. For this reason, no bodies are left behind, no trace whatsoever of the evil women's presence.

Yet Ino the child killer is also the nurse and protector of the little Dionysus. For this reason, she was honored as a kourotrophic divinity, a goddess who watches over the growth and maturation of young men. Athletic contests of ephebes were held in her honor at Miletus.¹¹⁶ She was also frequently associated with her son Melicertes on Corinthian coinage,¹¹⁷ and in Melitaia (Thessaly) she was worshipped specifically as the nurse of Dionysus.¹¹⁸ According to Pausanias 3.24.4, the people of Brasiae in Laconia brought visitors to the grotto where Ino hid the baby Dionysus.

Ino's madness and her paradoxical relationship to children make her a quintessential Maenad.¹¹⁹ Indeed, the name "Maenad" is derived from the verb *mainomai* "to be mad."

These frenzied female worshippers of Dionysus were said to tear little animals to shreds with their bare hands. Sometimes, the victims were not animals but the Maenads' own children, like Agave's son Pentheus in Euripides' *Bacchae*. According to Hyginus, Euripides depicted Ino as a Maenad in his lost tragedy *Ino*.¹²⁰ In this version of the myth, Ino leaves Thebes to participate in the Dionysiac festival in the wilds of Mount Parnassus. After she has been gone for a long time, Athamas, believing she is dead, marries Themisto and has children with her. Themisto is thus the stepmother in this version of the myth, and she wants to kill the children of Ino. Themisto asks Ino, who has returned disguised as a servant in the meantime, to dress her rival's children in dark clothes while her own are dressed in white. Ino swaps the clothing and Themisto kills her own children. Realizing her crime, she kills herself; Ino leaps into the sea with Melicertes in fear of Athamas's vengeance. In this version, Ino the Maenad forces Themisto "Justice" to act like a Maenad and kill her own children, an act that utterly destroys her. As for Ino, her leap into the sea illustrates her Dionysiac madness and her complete separation from the community, a separation that her worship of Dionysus had already effected.¹²¹

Ino's association with Dionysus may also be the reason she was thought to have oracular powers, as Maenads are often said to possess such knowledge.¹²² At Magnesia on the Maeander, Ino-Leucothea had an oracular cult in which she was associated with Dionysus and the Maenads.¹²³ In Epidauros Limera, Ino-Leucothea had a sacred lake through which she delivered oracles.¹²⁴ Larson notes that this lake was probably thought to connect to the Underworld.¹²⁵ Ino thus seems to share Dionysus's ability to visit the Underworld while being immortal.¹²⁶ In fact, both Ino and Dionysus are partly mortal, they both die (cf. Semele, who dies during her pregnancy and Dionysus/Zagreus, who is dismembered by the Titans and revived in a cauldron by the gods), and they are both renewed as immortal gods. Perhaps for this reason, Leucothea Chthonia "Leucothea of the Earth" is associated with Hermes, Hekate, Pluto, and Persephone on a curse tablet found at Panticapea on the Black Sea.¹²⁷ It is unclear whether this Leucothea is Ino or not, considering the many Leucotheai worshipped in the Eastern part of the Mediterranean. However, the associations with the powers of the Underworld as well as with Hermes, who travels between Hades and the surface, seem to underscore Ino's own passage in the Underworld and her renewal as an immortal goddess. This passage through death is probably the reason she possesses oracular powers (cf. Amphiaraus and Trophonius, both mortals who died and received the gift of prophecy).¹²⁸ Furthermore, Ino's leap into the sea places her in parallel with marine divinities such as Nereus, Proteus, and Thetis, who have oracular powers because they have access to the age-old knowledge hidden in the depths of the sea (see [Chapter 1](#)). We have seen in [Chapter 1](#) that Glaucus, another mortal who becomes immortal and leaps into the sea, also acquires oracular powers when he is transformed into an Old Man of the Sea after being cleansed of his mortality in the water.¹²⁹

Death and renewal was an important aspect of the cult of Ino-Leucothea in the Roman period, where the cauldron Ino uses to cook her children in the Dionysiac version of the myth came to represent a transition to the afterlife and even a passage to immortality after death.¹³⁰ Libanius in *Or.* 14.65 mentions a mystery cult of Ino that was active in his time in connection with the mysteries of the Cabiri and those of Demeter. Two inscriptions also attest to the "apotheosis" of worshippers in the cauldron used at the festival of Ino.¹³¹ While we have no details about these cults, it seems certain that the cauldron represents death and renewal. It recalls Dionysus-Zagreus's own death and rebirth in a cauldron after his dismemberment by the Titans,¹³² as well as Medea's rejuvenation of Aeson in a cauldron.¹³³ These two figures, Dionysus/Zagreus and Medea, are closely associated with Ino. The three of them together form a rather perturbing trio, as they unite the opposites of life and death, child care and murder, joyful ecstasy and

savage rites of *sparagmos* “dismemberment.” Ino resolves these oppositions through death in the sea, as she abandons her former self and finds renewal. She loses her mortal attributes in the sea, her mental disposition changes, and she finally reaches the divine world and immortality.¹³⁴

Conclusion

Diving into the sea separates an individual from the community and prepares his or her entrance in the world beyond, either the afterlife or the company of the gods. This effect of the leap is not limited to myth but was also actualized in cult, as demonstrated by the ritual immersion performed during the Great Mysteries of Eleusis. On 16 Boedromion, the initiates bathed in the sea to purify themselves and their offerings (piglets) before the ceremony.¹³⁵ The *mystai* “initiates” all ran together into the sea shouting ἄλαδε μύσται! “into the sea, initiates!” As a result, the initiates broke with their former life and entered a state in which they were ready to encounter the gods of Eleusis. The intermediary status of the initiates is illustrated by the fact that a break occurred at this moment in the ceremonies.¹³⁶ The immersion was followed by two days of intermission, a period during which the *mystai* stayed at home. Finally, the divine revelation that was offered during the final night of the Mysteries transformed the initiates forever.¹³⁷ They became part of a select group of worshippers who had witnessed the secret rites and therefore stood in a special relationship with the divine.¹³⁸ Their dash into the sea evokes a breathless run away from the world and a quick, pollution-free death by drowning. Nonetheless, this death opens the door to renewal, an irreversible transformation through which the drowning leads to the acquisition of a new identity and a heightened level of consciousness as an initiate.¹³⁹ The goddesses of Eleusis, Demeter and Persephone, are particularly appropriate to monitor such a transition, as they preside over a cycle of death and renewal.¹⁴⁰

CHAPTER 6



Figure 17. Cup of Exekias. Attic black-figure kylix from Vulci, ca. 530 BC. Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Inv. 8729. Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek München. Photo: Renate Kühling.

The tension between life and death in Dionysus's personality finds a close parallel in the Greek conception of the sea. In fact, two stories show the god actually passing between life and death through the sea. The first is an obscure and probably late version of the myth of Dionysus's birth in which Semele and Dionysus are locked in a chest and cast into the sea, much like Danae and Perseus.⁹ When the chest washes ashore in Brasiaie, Semele is dead but the little Dionysus is alive. The story demonstrates the essential difference between Dionysus and his mother while also emphasizing the close intermeshing of life and death in the god's origins and personality. The marine context suggests that the episode literally takes place between life and death, as the voyage in the chest represents Semele's voyage to Hades and the outcome shows Dionysus's triumphant immortality.

The second, more important story appears in the *Iliad* 6.123–43,¹⁰ where Dionysus runs away from Lycurgus's murderous madness and throws himself into the sea to finally find reassurance with Thetis. This dangerous leap evokes death by drowning, but it is accomplished in fear of an even worse, bloody death. Dionysus's fear in the face of a mortal (φοβηθείς, δειδίωτα) is surprising in the broader context of Greek mythology—the only parallels are the battles between gods and mortals in the *Iliad*—and suggests that Dionysus's actions in this situation are modeled on the behavior of mortals. Indeed, Dionysus's fear is consistent with the fear of the mortals who perform leaps into the sea which we studied in [Chapter 5](#). As we have seen, the gesture of diving into the sea is associated with mental turmoil and signals a definitive departure from the human community under the pressure of life-altering distress. In particular, Dionysus's leap into the sea and survival recalls Ino's leap and the story of Arion in which the protagonists pass through death to find the divine. Ino, Dionysus's nurse and the first Maenad, who is responsible for the murder of her children and maddened with guilt and fear, actually

dies as a result of her leap—ritual dirges are even sung for her.¹¹ However, she finds immortality in the sea as the goddess Leucothea. As for Arion, he is pressured to dive into the sea by pirates who threaten to kill him. Arion is convinced that he will die in the sea (in many of our sources, he sings his own funerary lament) but he is rescued by a dolphin, a miracle that he interprets as a divine revelation.¹² In this context, Dionysus's leap in fear of Lycurgus emphasizes both his mortal and his immortal nature, as the leap evokes death while its conclusion places Dionysus among the gods and reveals his immortality. Like the sea itself, Dionysus unites life, death, and the divine.

The Life and Death of the Tyrrhenian Pirates

The correlation between the intermediary nature of the sea and Dionysus's ability to manage the interplay between life and death is manifest in the story of the Tyrrhenian pirates.¹³ The story starts as a typical example of Dionysiac advent and rejection. The young Dionysus makes his epiphany on the seashore (ἐράνῃ παρὰ θῖν' ἄλὸς ἀτρυγέτοιο "he appeared by the shore of the sterile sea," *Hymn. Hom. Bacch.* 2) and is captured by unsuspecting pirates who expect to exact a hefty ransom from his family.¹⁴ This act of aggression toward the god—and the pirates' very nature as aggressors—emphasizes the classic theme of opposition to Dionysus as well as the stark reversal operated by the god. Indeed, the pirates are doomed from the start. Led by a cruel fate (τοὺς δ' ἤγε κακὸς μόρος "a sinister destiny led them on," *Hymn. Hom. Bacch.* 8), the pirates seek to bind Dionysus. The god reveals his power by loosening all his bonds, making wine flow on the ship, growing a vine and ivy about the mast and sail, and finally transforming himself into a roaring lion while conjuring an illusory bear on the ship. At this point, when Dionysus in his lion shape is about to kill the captain, the terrified pirates leap into the sea to avoid a bloody death. Like other divers, and like Dionysus himself, they accomplish their leap out of deathly fear and compulsion (*Hymn. Hom. Bacch.* 48: ἐφόβηθεν "they fled in fear"; *Hymn. Hom. Bacch.* 51–52: κακὸν μόρον ἐξαλύνοντες ... πῆδησαν "they jumped to avoid a cruel fate").¹⁵ The pirates' leap into the sea thus marks the moment when they are overpowered and cease to oppose the god.

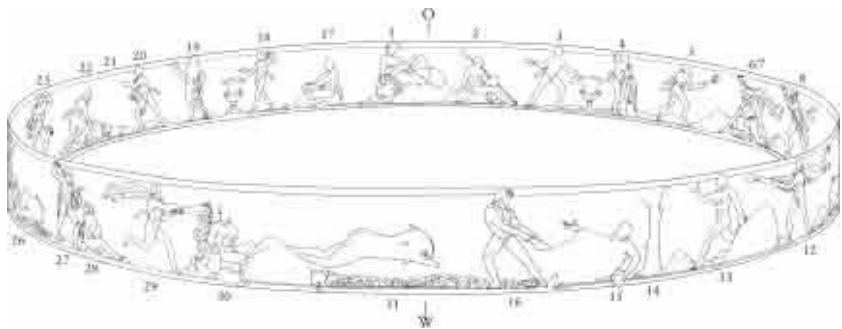


Figure 18. Frieze of the choragic monument of Lysicrates, 335/334 BC. Illustration courtesy of Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Ehrhardt.

The pirates' defeat at the hands of Dionysus is vividly illustrated on the monument of Lysicrates, erected to commemorate a choragic victory in 335/334 BC. On the frieze of the monument, the confrontation takes place on land as satyrs beat the pirates with their *thyrsoi*, the pine-cone topped staves of Dionysus's followers (Fig. 18).¹⁶ One satyr raises

his thyrsus as he is about to strike a defeated pirate who is curled up under his knee.¹⁷ Another satyr threatens a pirate who seems to raise his hand in supplication, and a third chases a frightened pirate. Meanwhile, other satyrs carry torches and drink from two large kraters, Dionysus pets a panther, and several pirates are transformed into dolphins. They have dolphin heads and dorsal fins, but their legs are still visible as they bend their knees in a position that evokes a dive into the sea. The stark contrast between the land battle and the pirates' metamorphosis into sea animals underscores their passage into the sea and definitive departure from the human realm. This physical change that affects the very nature of the pirates recalls other changes operated by a leap into the sea discussed in previous chapters such as Glaucus's metamorphosis and suggests that a psychological change is afoot.

Later authors, namely Seneca *Oedipus* 450–54 and Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 45.95–168, imprint a funerary connotation onto the scene with subtle, yet unmistakable touches. In these texts, ivy and vines grow on the pirates' ship and an illusion transforms the sea into a meadow (λειτουργόν, *nemus*).¹⁸ In Nonnus, Dionysus also turns the mast of the pirates' ship into a cypress tree.¹⁹ Both the cypress and the meadow evoke death. The cypress is a well-known funerary symbol dedicated to Hades and Persephone, among other divinities. Cypress trees are grown near tombs and used as a sign of mourning.²⁰ As for the meadow, Motte explains that it integrates both life and death since it is a *locus amoenus* appropriate to sustain life but also represents the ghostly beauty of the afterlife, where the dead wander in the meadows of the Underworld.²¹ Meadows are associated with sexuality and Dionysiac worship, as in the description of an idyllic Dionysiac place of worship in Euripides' *Bacchae* 1043–1152 or when Persephone is abducted by Hades in a flowery meadow (*Hymn. Hom. Dem.* 7). The word λειτουργόν "meadow" can even designate female sexual parts, as in Euripides' *Cyclops* 171. Yet, meadows also often cover underground passages that lead to Hades.²² The meadow in which Persephone picks flowers opens to give way to the god of the dead himself, while Oedipus (Soph. *OC* 1590–91) and Ajax (Soph. *Ajax* 654–60) prepare for death in meadows in Sophocles' tragedies. Cole notes that the Dionysiac meadow, as described for instance in Euripides' *Bacchae*, is attractive but conceals death, since it eventually becomes the stage of Pentheus's savage dismemberment.²³ By placing the pirates' demise in a meadow, Seneca and Nonnus suggest that the pirates are in an ambiguous state between life and death.

For our purposes, it is interesting that one of the most important characteristics of meadows is the presence of a source of fresh water, which keeps the grounds cool, fertile, and pleasant while acting as a tunnel to the Underworld.²⁴ According to Diodorus 5.4.2, Persephone disappeared through the spring Cyane when she was abducted by Hades. Likewise, Amphiaras was said to have risen up from the Underworld through a spring after his deification (Paus. 1.34.4). In Seneca's *Oedipus*, Creon describes the ascent of the dead in a meadow watered by a dark spring (*tristis umor*, 545–46) and shaded by a cypress tree less than a hundred lines after the description of the illusory meadow created for the Tyrrhenian pirates (line 452). Thus, in the story of the Tyrrhenian pirates as told by Nonnus and Seneca, the freshwater of the spring is deceptively replaced by the waters of the sea, which are well known for their deathly sterility (see [Chapter 1](#)), and are therefore here equivalent to the spring as a conduit to Hades. While the pirates seek to dance in the illusory beauty of a lush and well-watered meadow, they actually come in between life and death. Instead of a source of fertility and refreshment, the water of the illusory spring is the deadly water of the Underworld or the sterile water of the sea. Moreover, the illusion replaces the solidity of the land with the fluidity of the sea in a typically Dionysiac alternation between opposites. Finally, the illusion recalls the paradoxical formula πόντος ἀτρύγετος "the unharvested sea," which contrasts the fertility of land with the sterility of the sea.

The interplay between life and death in the story of the Tyrrhenian pirates is further emphasized by the ambiguity of the pirates themselves in their relationship to life and death. Indeed, the Tyrrhenian pirates are notorious for a particularly gruesome form of torture, namely the binding of live prisoners with dead ones.²⁵ Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 45.110 interprets this tradition as meaning that the pirates threw their prisoners overboard when they were only half-dead (ἡμιθνής). Perhaps as an allusion to these tortures, in which Dionysus's retinue retaliates in kind, the monument of Lysicrates shows a satyr striking a pirate whose hands are bound and on whom a snake crawls. This live pirate is therefore helplessly confronted with a symbol of death. Overall, the pirates deal and are dealt an ambivalent death, even as they roam an intermediary space, namely the sea. Dionysus's treatment of the pirates thus responds to the pirates' own ambiguity.

Dolphins and Dionysiac Worship

Yet the pirates' life does not end after their encounter with Dionysus. As they enter an intermediary state between life and death, they are transformed into dolphins, a metamorphosis that suggests that they actually become *worshippers* of Dionysus in his marine realm. Dolphins are common in sympotic imagery, where they regularly frame sympotic and other Dionysiac scenes by appearing under the handles of wine vessels, in particular kylikes and skyphoi, regardless of whether or not the scene on the vase takes place on land or at sea.²⁶ On sympotic vessels, dolphins also partake of wine and revelry (Fig. 19),²⁷ accompany Dionysus,²⁸ serve as mounts for symposiasts,²⁹ or are playfully contrasted with hoplites (Fig. 20).³⁰ Many symposiasts even undergo the same metamorphosis as the pirates, and vase paintings show them in the course of a progressive transformation into dolphins (Figs. 21 and 22).³¹ As Descoeudres explains, this metamorphosis represents the transformation operated on men by Dionysus at the symposium, and it therefore provides a context for the pirates' metamorphosis.³² By becoming dolphins, the Tyrrhenian pirates join Dionysus's retinue of revelers. Considering the dolphin's function as mediator between men and gods discussed in Chapter 4, it is unsurprising to find the animal in this role, especially when the pirates find themselves in an intermediary station between life and death.



Figure 19. Corinthian kylix, sixth century BC. Paris, Louvre, MNC 674. Photo: © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.



Figure 20. Psykter of Oltos, Attic, ca. 520–510 BC. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 1989.281.69. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Norbert Schimmel Trust, 1989.

The dolphin is so closely associated with the transformation of Dionysus's worshippers that the very shape of its body is used in the iconography of the symposium to emphasize the frenzy of drunken revelers. As described by Isler, two early Classical dinoi (mixing bowls used at the symposium) show dolphins jumping up and down with the curves of their bodies running in parallel to one another.³³ Broad concentric circles in the bottom of the bowls accentuate the whirling effect produced by the dolphins and recall the disorientation of inebriated symposiasts. Similarly, on the psykter of Oltos (Fig. 20), four hoplites ride dolphins in a circular motion around the vase.³⁴ The dolphins' eyes are depicted as concentric circles to represent dizziness and drunkenness.³⁵ The hoplites' shields show wine vessels—an amphora, a kantharos, and a kylix—in alternation with whirling devices in the form of a *triskele* (three legs forming a whirligig), four spinning

dolphins, and a curious gyrating symbol made up of the superimposition of three wings(?) and a chimera-like animal with the heads of a horse, peacock, and snake(?).³⁶ When this psykter was floating in a krater and the two dinoi were filled up, the whirling dolphins would seem to be diving in and out of the wine.³⁷ The image caricatures the symposiasts' eagerness to drink as the dolphins joyfully leap into the wine. In addition, as argued by Csapo, the circular motion of the dolphins' bodies recalls circular choral dances such as the dithyramb, which were especially performed in honor of Dionysus.³⁸ In the colorful imagery of the symposium, dolphins represent the contact between Dionysus and his worshippers when revelers allow themselves to be literally transformed by drunkenness, music, and dance, just as the Tyrrhenian pirates are transformed by the power of Dionysus. Alternatively, or in addition, the dolphins allude to the connections seen by the Greeks between the sea and wine (οἶνοπα πόντον "the wine-dark sea," e.g., *Il.* 2.613), as the wine replaces the sea and the dolphins leap into the cups.



Figure 21. Kalpis attributed to the Painter of the Vatican 238, Etruscan (probably from Vulci), ca. 520–510 BC. Formerly in the collection of the Toledo Museum of Art.



Figure 22. Black-figure kylix from Vulci, 570–560 BC. Rome, Villa Giulia, 64608.

Many of our later texts concerning the story of the Tyrrhenian pirates support this claim by showing that Dionysiac revelry actually operates the pirates' metamorphosis. In Apollodorus 3.37, Dionysus turns the mast and oars of the pirates' ship into snakes, he makes ivy grow everywhere, and he fills the pirates' ears with the sound of pipes.³⁹ Under the spell of the trance-inducing music of the *aulos* "reed-pipe,"⁴⁰ the pirates turn mad with Dionysiac frenzy and leap into the sea,⁴¹ where they are metamorphosed into dolphins.⁴² In this context, the metamorphosis of the pirates into marine animals illustrates the mental transformation that occurs when men worship Dionysus with dance and music. Apollodorus comments, ὥς δὲ αὐτὸν θεὸν ἄνθρωποι ἐτίμων "thus men recognized him [Dionysus] as a god and worshipped him." In this interpretation, Dionysus's show of power not only reveals his divine nature but also compels the pirates to worship him.

Similarly, in Aglaosthenes' *Naxiaca* (FGrH 499F3 = Hyg. *Poet. astr.* 2.17.2), Dionysus is captured with his entire retinue. When Dionysus begins to suspect the pirates' intentions, he commands his followers to sing in Bacchic fashion. As in Apollodorus, the pirates are enthralled by the music. They start to dance, and as they dance, they are seized with the desire to throw themselves into the sea, where they become dolphins. Here, Dionysiac music and dancing provoke the pirates' own will to dive and to become Dionysus's worshippers. Nonnus's interpretation follows along the same lines. In *Dionysiaca* 45.95–168, Tiresias admonishes Pentheus, who rejects Dionysus, to be pious by telling him the story of the Tyrrhenian pirates. The episode thus draws a direct parallel between the story of the pirates and Euripides' *Bacchae*, one of the most famous examples of Dionysiac advent. In this version, the pirates come ashore from their boat to attack Dionysus. Dionysus shouts, then he turns the boat's rigging into snakes, he grows the mast into a cypress tree entwined with ivy, and he grows a vine through the oar holes. Finally, Dionysus makes wine bubble up on the deck and conjures wild beasts such

as bulls and lions. The pirates' fear at these prodigies is described as Dionysiac madness: Τυρσηνοὶ δ' ἰάχισαν, ἐβακχεύοντο δὲ λύσση εἰς φόβον οἰστρηθέντες "the Tyrrhenians shouted and reveled, goaded to flee by their madness" (*Dionysiaca* 45.152–53). Then, as discussed above, Dionysus makes the sea look like a meadow in which a shepherd plays the pipes. The pirates are immediately turned mad by the illusion and the music: ἀμερσινῶ δ' ὑπὸ λύσση εἰς βυθὸν ἀίσσοντες ἐπαρχήσαντο γαλήνῃ, ποντοπόροι δελφίνες "deluded by their madness they leapt into the deep and danced in the calm water in the shape of sea-crossing dolphins." The mad pirates leap into the sea where they dance in Bacchic fashion, as if they were at a Bacchic celebration or in the afterlife.⁴³ Here, Dionysiac revelry is both the instrument and the result of the pirates' transformation, which is illustrated by their transition to the sea and their new appearance as dolphins.

Finally, in Philostratus's *Imagines* 1.19, the pirates are on board their own ship (ναῦς ληστρική, a pirate boat) while Dionysus is in command of a second ship, described as sacred (ναῦς θεωρίς, a ship used for sacred embassies).⁴⁴ Dionysus and his retinue are indeed carrying out a religious mission: they are bringing the pirates under the sway of the god. To do so, Dionysus and his companions perform orgiastic dances and songs with such passion that the sea resounds with Bacchic music. In reaction to this demonstration, the pirates are transformed into dolphins as they go mad and forget to row (μαίνονται καὶ τῆς εἰρεσίας ἐκλανθάνονται). In the face of Dionysus's power, the pirates lose track of their original purpose and even lose their own identity to accept Dionysus. As Philostratus puts it, the power of Dionysus transforms the pirates into dolphins, which also transforms their lifestyle from bad to good (τὰ δὲ ἦθη χρηστοῖς ἐκ φαύλων "their disposition went from bad to good").⁴⁵

Dionysus thus operates a complete renewal on the pirates by turning them into dolphins. The metamorphosis represents not only the acceptance of Dionysus, but also the transformation operated on Bacchic revelers, who forget their cares and enmities to enjoy wine and dance together in the relaxed atmosphere of the symposium. In these texts as in sympotic imagery, the marine space is the domain of Dionysus. The effect of wine, music, and dance compels pirates and symposiasts alike to accept the god and to become revelers. The pirates' leap into the sea illustrates their transition into the Dionysiac world as symposiasts and servants of Dionysus. In general, we observe that the gods ensure the safe crossing of those humans who are compelled to leap into the sea when their mental state is altered by *mania* or some other form of communication with the divine, as in the stories of Ino, Arion, the pirates, and Glaucus.⁴⁶ The leap and its result are a physical manifestation of the irreversible psychological change operated by contact with the divine.

Losing Control

The sea is the stage for the encounter between Dionysus and his worshippers. The god uses the sea as a space where he reveals himself while also capturing his worshippers' senses through illusions. The sea is therefore a point of contact between the visible and the invisible, or between what is clearly seen and what is imagined in a maddened mind. As Henrichs notes, Dionysus's revelation is especially characterized by visual cues.⁴⁷ In the story of the Tyrrhenian pirates as told in the *Homeric Hymn*, the encounter begins with Dionysus's visual epiphany (ἐφάνη παρὰ θῖν' ἄλὸς ἀτρυγέτοιο "he appeared on the shore of the barren sea," line 2). Then, the pirates see Dionysus (οἱ δὲ ἰδόντες "and they, having seen him ...," line 8) and decide to take him hostage. When Dionysus starts to retaliate, miracles appear (ἐφαίνετο θαυματὰ ἔργα "amazing things were seen," line 34).

The pirates are astonished at the sight (τάφος λάβε πάντας ἰδόντας “amazement took them all, as they saw this,” line 37; οἱ δὲ ἰδόντες “and having seen this,” line 42) and ask the helmsman to put to shore. But it is already too late. Dionysus turns himself into a lion and makes a bear appear on the ship as a way to reveal himself (σήματα φαίνων “showing tokens of recognition,” line 46). As a lion, Dionysus stares fiercely at the pirates (λέων ... δεινὸν ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν “the terrible lion looked at them askance,” line 47), until they see him snap at the captain’s throat, whereupon they leap into the sea (πάντες ὁμῶς πῆδησαν, ἐπεὶ ἴδον, εἰς ἄλλα διᾶν “when they saw this, they all jumped at once into the bright sea,” line 52). In this story as in its later versions, in which Dionysus makes the sea appear as land through an illusion, the marine space is the god’s canvas to present himself through direct sightings as well as through visions. The immediacy of the visual contact with Dionysus and its effect on the pirates is conveyed by the use of the aorist throughout the narration. As Ovid puts it in his own rendition of Dionysus’s revelation to the pirates, *nec enim praesentior illo est deus* “for no god is more present than he is” (*Met.* 3.658–59). Through his personal presence, Dionysus controls the interplay between reality and hallucination, and uses it to direct men’s transition between sober-mindedness and madness. The loss of control induced by the illusions indicates a psychological change, which happens once humans yield to the compulsion to worship Dionysus.

As a locus of Dionysiac revelation, the sea is a place where men receive the impulse to worship Dionysus. In the case of the pirates, we have seen that this impulse is sudden, violent, and provokes an immediate transformation: they leap into the sea and become dolphins. This physical action represents a psychological upheaval, as Dionysus changes his worshippers’ mental disposition. The metaphor is so appropriate that Pindar fr. 166 (Snell-Maehler) uses the image of a leap to represent the effect of wine in a context where no physical leap is performed: <ἀνδρ>οδάμαν<τα> δ’ ἐπεὶ Φῆρες δάεν ριπὰν μελιαδέος οἴνου, ἐσσυμένως ἀπὸ μὲν λευκὸν γάλα χερσὶ τραπεῖζαν ὤθειον, αὐτόματοι δ’ ἐξ ἀργυρέων κεράτων πίνοντες ἐπλάζοντο “And when the Pheres felt the killer thrust of honey-sweet wine, they furiously cast the white milk from the tables with their hands, and drinking, unasked, from the silver horns, they began to wander in their minds.” In this passage, which describes the beginning of the fight between Lapiths and Centaurs, the overwhelming power of wine induces a *rhipê*, a thrust forward. Under the impulse of wine, the Centaurs violently reject a nonalcoholic beverage.⁴⁸ They literally throw themselves into drunkenness. The episode recalls Silenus’s leap into the sea in Euripides’ *Cyclops* 164–74, who also used a form of the verb *rhiptein* (ρίψας τ’ ἐς ἄλμην “throwing myself into the sea”). The passage also recalls Anacreon’s description of the Leucadian leap (fr. 31 Page), where an enraptured symposiast throws himself into the sea under the influence of wine and sexual desire (see [Chapter 5](#)). Finally, the leap recalls the story of the Tyrrhenian pirates who throw themselves into the sea under the sway of Dionysus. All these leaps result in a loss of psychological control. The pirates become mad revelers, Silenus forgets his sorrows (κακῶν τε λῆστις “forgetting of cares,” Eur. *Cycl.* 172), and Pindar’s Centaurs let their minds wander (πίνοντες ἐπλάζοντο). Worshipping Dionysus by drinking wine, dancing, and engaging in sexual activity provokes a physical and mental spring forward that leads to a modified form of consciousness characterized by a loss of control.

The unceasing movement of the sea mimics the symposiasts’ lack of control over their minds as well as the tipsiness of their bodies. The undulation of the waves and the whirl pools formed by the water illustrate the rush of emotions and impulsions of Dionysus’s worshippers, as they lose both mental focus and physical control in drunkenness and *mania*. In fact, as demonstrated by Slater and Davies, it was a common metaphor to compare the symposium to a ship navigating on the sea.⁴⁹ In Euripides’ *Alcestis* 798, Heracles recommends a servant to drink and be merry, saying “μεθορμεῖ σε πίτυλος

ἐμπεσῶν σκύφου,” a metaphor for the “rowing of Dionysus” that literally translates as “the sweep of oars falling into the cup will remove you from one anchorage to another.” Similarly, Dionysius Chalcus fr. 5 (West) speaks of συμποσίου ναῦται καὶ κυλίκων ἐρέται “sailors of the symposium and rowers of cups.” Finally, on a red-figure cup in the Louvre, satyrs ride amphorae over the sea in a game that recalls the metaphor of the symposium-ship.⁵⁰ This metaphor is evoked even in the story of the Tyrrhenian pirates, where Dionysus transforms the pirates’ ship into a symposium ship. In this context, the cup of Exekias may or may not represent the story of the Tyrrhenian pirates, or perhaps it represents both pirates and symposiasts in a polysemic representation, since the story of the pirates is imbued with the symposium-ship metaphor. Considering the communal and political importance of the symposium, the image of the symposium as a ship can also be seen as a playful pendant to the famous “ship of state” metaphor, in which political life is depicted as a sea voyage punctuated by storms and hopefully concluded by arrival in a safe harbor.⁵¹ The symposium, like political life, carries its team of sailors through ups and downs and brings them around to the end of the night. For the pirates, the voyage goes even farther, since they reach the end of life and a new beginning.

In connection with the metaphor of the symposium as a ship, Davies suggests—admittedly without definite proof—that the salute to Helios that traditionally opened the symposium at sunset drew a parallel between the drinkers, who were to spend the night in their symposium ship, and the solar god, who traveled every night from west to east in a drinking cup.⁵² I incline to think that Davies’s intuition is right, as some sympotic vessels present Helios’s nightly ride in a Dionysiac context. For instance, on an Athenian black-figure skyphos, Helios rides a winged chariot toward Heracles, perhaps as he is about to lend him the vehicle (Fig. 23).⁵³ Branches of ivy decorate the background, particularly near the heads of the figures, and a frieze of ivy decorates the lip of the cup, while two white dolphins swim underwater. Similarly, on an amphora in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (inv. IV 815, ca. 490 BC), Helios rides a chariot pulled by winged horses. Branches of ivy crown the god’s head and seem to rise from his shoulders. Perhaps Helios is here represented as a symposiast in a sea voyage at the crossroads of night and day?⁵⁴

Whatever the case may be with Helios, symposiasts travel—metaphorically at least—outside the boundaries of the everyday experience. They are released from the cares and pressures of life. This psychological freedom enjoyed by Dionysus’s worshippers earned the god the epithet of Lysios “the releaser.” This mental freedom is paralleled by physical freedom, as represented by orgiastic dance and sexual activity. Furthermore, as Jaccottet explains, the freedom of Dionysus’s worshippers extends to physical restraint and military coercion.⁵⁵ She points out that in Euripides’ *Bacchae*, the god’s followers are miraculously delivered from their bonds (447–48), as well as Dionysus himself (576–641). Similarly, at the beginning of the *Homeric Hymn*, the pirates attempt to bind Dionysus to no avail (*Hymn. Hom. Bacch.* 12–14). Moreover, Pausanias 9.16.6 reports that some Thebans who had been captured by Thracians were freed by Dionysus’s intervention, who made the Thracians fall asleep. Jaccottet also analyzes a decree from Eretria (*IG XII* 9, 192, end of fourth century BC) that records a decision to offer ivy crowns to all the inhabitants of the town on the day of the procession of the Dionysia. The gesture was intended to commemorate the unexpected departure of an occupying foreign garrison during the procession. In all these cases, Dionysus resolves physical restraint without the need for confrontation. The power of the god operates an instantaneous and pain-free release from captivity, whether psychological or physical. By embarking on a sea voyage with Dionysus or diving into the sea to be transformed, worshippers are freed from ordinary concerns and constraints, and they can even be freed from their past, as in the case of the Tyrrhenian pirates, who are renewed as symposiasts.



Figure 23. Attic skyphos, ca. 500 BC. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Taranto, 7029. Photo: Mondadori Portfolio / Electa / Art Resource, NY.

Eternal Symposia

In this manner, the symposium is seen as a bridge between daily and divine life. The symposium transports the banqueters out of their ordinary activities and into the eternal sphere of the sacred and the afterlife. This theme was richly exploited in Etruscan funerary painting, which is known to have adopted and adapted Greek elements.⁵⁶ In fact, many of the sympotic vases discussed above that illustrate Dionysiac *mania* as a transformation into dolphins come from or are known to have circulated in Etruria.⁵⁷ Thus, an important connection existed in Etruria between Dionysiac and eschatological themes, and marine imagery often framed this nexus. In the Tomb of the Lionesses, Tarquinia, ca. 520 BC (Fig. 24),⁵⁸ two panthers, typical Dionysiac beasts, face one another in the pediment. A large and prominent banquet scene complete with dancers, reclining drinkers, and a garlanded krater decorates the upper register of the walls. Below, in the lower register, separated from the symposium scene by a floral frieze, dolphins leap into dark waves and colorful ducks fly. Similarly, in the second chamber of the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing, Tarquinia, end of the sixth century BC (Figs. 25 and 26),⁵⁹ a symposium scene occupies the pediment. The walls below are decorated with an elaborate marine setting animated with dolphins and aquatic birds.⁶⁰ On the back wall, a fowler aims at passing birds with a sling while several men are fishing in a dinghy. On the left wall, a man dives into the waves from a rock while another shorter figure climbs up.

In both tombs, as explained by Descoeudres, the juxtaposition of the symposium and the marine scene is meant to evoke the transition between life and death.⁶¹ Since the tomb

itself is the point of juncture between life and death, a place of exchange between the ephemeral and the eternal, the marine scene on the frescoes can be seen to evoke the voyage of the dead from this world to the Islands of the Blessed.⁶² In this context, the banquet scenes are polysemic. They represent the banquets celebrated by the deceased during his life, the funerary feast in honor of the dead, and the eternal banquets of the dead in the afterlife.⁶³ The banquet provides a stable image that travels across different planes of reality, namely from life to death and from the visible to the invisible, all of which are united under the power of Dionysus.⁶⁴



Figure 24. Tomb of the Lionesses, Tarquinia, ca. 520 BC. Photo: Scala / Art Resource, NY.

The Tomb of the Diver, a cist grave from Paestum, ca. 475 BC (Fig. 27), provides a striking illustration of the concept. Elaborate symposium scenes decorate the walls while the cover shows a diver jumping into the sea from a white structure. As we have seen above, diving under the sway of Dionysus represents the unavoidable transition between life and death—in this case, the image illustrates the inescapability of death for mortals. The leap culminates in the survival of the protagonist in a different state of existence, namely divinity or the afterlife.⁶⁵ The symposium scenes emphasize the transitional imagery by presenting an image of *plea sure*, which was perhaps enjoyed in life but is certainly hoped for in the afterlife. The contrast between the symposium taking place on land and the diver's leap into the sea further underscores the idea of a transition between elements, which represents a transition between different states of existence.



Figure 25. Tomb of Hunting and Fishing, Tarquinia, sixth century BC, second chamber, back wall. Photo: Scala / Art Resource, NY.

The same contrast between land and sea also appears in many Etruscan tombs in the absence of Dionysiac symbols. The Tomba Dei (Magliano, ca. 600 BC),⁶⁶ the Grotta Dipinta (Bomarzo, end of the fourth century BC),⁶⁷ the Tomb of the Dolphins at Populonia (mid-third century BC),⁶⁸ and the Tomb of the Dolphins at Vulci (after 280 BC)⁶⁹ all show leaping dolphins on the walls or dolphins and hippocamps in the pediments. In some tombs, the dolphin is the only animal present and is placed in direct parallel with funerary representations. For instance, the three intact walls of the Bruschi Tomb (end of the third/first half of the second century BC)⁷⁰ depict a funerary procession in the upper register, while the lower register is occupied by a frieze of leaping dolphins and waves. The pilasters show Charun with a hammer and a draped woman, a representation that reemphasizes the overall chthonic decoration of the tomb and thus attracts further attention to the contrasting marine frieze. In the Tomb of the Typhon (Tarquinia, mid-second century BC),⁷¹ the marine frieze occupies the upper register and shows red and blue dolphins leaping in and out of the waves. The right wall, under the frieze, shows a funerary procession complete with psychopompic demons, one of them carrying a hammer. In these tombs, the marine and chthonic themes are directly juxtaposed, a sharp contrast that recalls the interplay between life and death that the tomb contains and expresses.



Figure 26. Tomb of Hunting and Fishing, Tarquinia, sixth century BC, second chamber, left wall. Photo: Scala / Art Resource, NY.



Figure 27. Tomb of the Diver, Poseidonia, ca. 475 BC. Photo: Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY.

Conclusion

In Dionysiac contexts, the sea is a locus of Dionysiac epiphany as well as the space in which the god's worshippers transition between ordinary consciousness and *mania*, or life and afterlife. The intermediary nature of the sea reflects Dionysus's own contradictions, as he unites mortality and immortality, violent confrontations and merry

communal feasting, and finally the visible and the invisible. In this context, the sea is the perfect environment for Dionysus to operate his *lysis*, the relaxation and freedom from coercion enjoyed by his worshippers. As Plutarch *Moralia* 611d–e states, the lysis of Dionysus can be understood as the liberation of the soul from the body in death, and it is the reason initiates should not fear death. The process is perhaps illustrated in the story of the Tyrrhenian pirates, as they change bodies during their passage to a new life in which they are freed from their sordid lifestyle to become benevolent dolphins who worship Dionysus at the symposium.

Conclusion

In the introduction, we noted the difficulties encountered by scholars in accounting for the diversity in the circumstances and the outcomes of sea crossings in Greek mythology. In their studies, many researchers remark on the impossibility of establishing a comprehensive classification without distorting the materials.¹ An important issue is that such classifications tend to focus on the result rather than the reasons behind the transformations operated at sea. Consequently, those trying to establish typological classifications struggle to explain why a sea crossing or leap into the sea can yield similar results for different types of mythological figures or vice versa.

The six case studies presented here have shown that, despite the high degree of variation in the myths about sea crossings and leaps into the sea, the conceptions that underlie the narratives are consistent. In the Greek worldview, the sea is not only an intermediary space between countries and continents, but also the boundary between the worlds of the living, the dead, and the gods. In other words, the sea separates the visible and invisible worlds. For this reason, physical transitions at sea can represent psychological transformations. The sea is thus an appropriate setting to illustrate mental changes as diverse as male and female coming-of-age and contact with the divine, madness, and death.

As an intermediary space, the sea integrates features of all the regions it divides, and therefore presents paradoxical characteristics. The sea is a source of life and sustenance, but it is also associated with barrenness and death. The sea is described as a pathway or a road, yet marks an impassable boundary. Finally, the sea is spatially ambiguous, since its horizontal plane can also lead down into a vertical abyss. The Greeks even imagined that in the farthest reaches of the sea, on the line of the horizon, the Ocean met with the bottomless chasm of Tartarus and the vault of heaven above. In this way, the sea not only mediates between different regions of the world, but also is the meeting point of different planes of reality. This conception is made clear by the recurring description of the Ocean as the meeting point of earth, air, and water, a juxtaposition of elements that illustrates the juxtaposition of the worlds.

Accordingly, the natural phenomena that occur at sea are often interpreted by the Greeks as gateways to the world beyond. Storms at sea blend air, water, and landmass together and disorient shipwrecked sailors. Yet, for Odysseus, the final storm he has to endure on his journey home is also the occasion of a divine revelation. As Odysseus is just about to drown, the goddess Leucothea saves him and lets him reach the land of the Phaeacians in safety (*Od.* 5.282–338). Similarly, the winds that blow on the sea are thought to convey mortals to the afterlife. In the *Odyssey* 20.61–66, Penelope wishes to die, carried away to the Ocean by a gust of wind (θύελλα). In funerary iconography, the winds are often depicted as psychopomps, carrying the dead to the afterlife over the waters of the Ocean.² We have also seen that variations in light and the presence of mist indicate a point of contact between the worlds of the living, the dead, and the gods. The alternation of light and dark signals the transition between two extremes, namely eternal death and eternal life, while the mortal world sees a gradual alteration of light levels through each day. Finally, mist forms a blurry and permeable boundary that hides invisible realities, yet lets them be dimly glimpsed as if through a veil. In this way, the Greeks express their conception of human limitations. Mortals are prevented from

experiencing the blessings of eternal life and are bound by the inescapability of death. Yet, in some special circumstances, the horizon opens and the mysteries of the afterlife and the divine are revealed.

The animals and creatures that populate the sea reflect its intermediary function. Fish are regarded with suspicion as both a source of sustenance and the potential devourers of the bodies of the dead. Seals, whales, octopods, and other marine animals are seen as monstrous and uncontrollable other than by divine action.³ Beautiful Nereids inhabit the sea, but their divine appearance so far outshines mortals that they cause fright.⁴ Along with the Nereids, a host of hybrid creatures are imagined to live in the sea, such as Tritons (half man, half fish), hippalektryons (half horse, half rooster), the deadly Scylla, and Sirens.⁵ These creatures are all intermediaries between various physical shapes and psychological states, especially life and death and mortality and immortality. Indeed, Tritons frequently appear as psychopomps on funerary monuments, particularly in the Hellenistic and Imperial periods.⁶ Similarly, Sirens sing beautifully but are deadly, and Scylla goes from being a lovely girl to a man-eating monster. Glaucus's hybrid merman shape represents his passage from mortality to immortality,⁷ and dolphin hybrids in Dionysiac representations illustrate the worshippers' state of *enthousiasmos* when they are in contact with the god.⁸ Aquatic birds aptly represent the transitions operated by the sea with their ability to fly, swim underwater, float on the surface, and live on land. For this reason, the human soul is often portrayed as an aquatic bird.⁹ Finally, dolphins integrate human intelligence and emotions, reverence for the divine, and a special concern for funerary rites. They are thus a privileged symbol of the transitional function of the sea.

Seawater and Transitions

This being said, how exactly did the Greeks imagine that the sea operated psychological transitions? As we have seen, the mythical hydrological network places the salt water of the sea in between two bodies of fresh water, namely the Ocean and the rivers and springs of the earth. While fresh water is fertile, sustaining either biological life on earth or the eternal life of the gods on the Ocean, salt water is sterile. Moreover, while both fresh water and salt water are considered pure, salt water promotes purity because it eradicates life itself. Thus, the water of the sea is strongly associated with death in Greek mythology. A voyage on the sea or an immersion into it takes mortals to the very edge of death, whether physically or symbolically. This close encounter with death can entail purification, a divine revelation, and/or a change of status. In all cases, the change that takes place is irreversible.

Such dynamics are evident in the stories of Danae, Auge, and Rhoeo. The girls float helplessly in chests on the waters of the sea, and their condition is depicted as in between life and death. In fact, as we have seen, Danae's internment in the chest is somewhat of a doublet of her internment in the underground chamber. In both cases, Danae is intended to die without her father incurring the pollution of murder. Similarly, Auge is confined to a temple or sent away in the wilderness before being locked in a chest and cast into the sea. She is all but dead to her family, yet no blood stains Aleos's hands. The same holds true for Rhoeo, although she is immediately sent away in the chest upon discovery of her pregnancy. In all three cases, the girls' landing is cast as marriage and the passage at sea resolves the ambiguity of their status as female heiresses and mothers without husbands. The girls' passage at sea illustrates their definitive separation from their families, a symbolic death that allows them to be renewed as married women. Alternatively, as Burkert suggests, the symbolic sacrifice of the girls and their "death" prompts their entry

into womanhood. This concept is made especially clear in the stories of Phronime and Iphigeneia, who are both intended to be killed—Iphigeneia through an actual sacrifice at an altar—and finally find a new life and marriage after crossing the sea. Sacrifice is the action of offering a living being to the gods, which is precisely what happens to Danae, Auge, Rhoio, and others. They are cast out by their families and exposed at sea, and their fate is left up to the providence of the gods. As always in Greek mythology, the gods rescue those who are exposed, but the circumstances and outcome of each narrative reveal its specific significance.

By contrast, Rhoeo's sisters Molpadia and Parthenos are also given up to the gods, but they do so of their own volition. The sisters jump into the sea after letting their father's jars of wine be broken by swine. Rather than face Staphylus's anger, they prefer to disappear in the depths. As a result, they are transformed into minor divinities by Apollo. As a sign of this change, Molpadia receives the name of Hemithea, "the half-goddess," and they are both established in heroic cults in coastal cities. Both remain eternal virgins, as is made clear by the name of Parthenos, "the Virgin." These girls do not go through the social transition that Rhoeo and Auge experience. They are forever taken out of human society and belong to a different plane of reality. Their leap into the sea extinguishes their mortal life but effects renewal on the "other side." Instead of reaching the other side of the sea and transitioning to a new phase of life, they lose themselves in the sea and transition to a new kind of life altogether.

Perseus and Jason remain above the surface of the sea but nonetheless experience a close brush with death. They both see the invisible world of the gods and the dead beyond the Ocean—or the Black Sea in most renditions of the Argonautic myth—and return to take a new place in society. As for Theseus, he risks death by diving into the high sea. He abandons himself to the depths, and his comrades on the ship start mourning for him. Yet, Theseus is not allowed to sink down or disappear. Friendly dolphins guide him to the palace of Poseidon, where he receives the confirmation of his divine ascendance. Theseus sees the Nereids and Amphitrite under the sea and is given wondrous gifts as a tangible token of his special status. When Theseus finally returns to the surface, Bacchylides is careful to mention that the hero is unwetted by his leap into the sea: μὸλ' ἀδιαντος ἔξ ἁλὸς θαῦμα πάντεσσι "he came out of the sea unwetted, a marvel to all" (*Ode* 17.122–23). This detail underscores Theseus's special nature as the son of Poseidon, and especially his victory over death in the abyss of the sea. As a result, Theseus is no longer a boy of uncertain lineage, but rather the confirmed son of a god and a new political leader. Through his leap into the sea and brush with death, Theseus accomplishes his social transition to manhood.

Arion's adventure at sea follows a similar model. When he is about to be killed by the pirates, Arion decides to leap into the sea, abandoning himself to the water. However, just before Arion's body sinks in the water (πρὶν δ' ὅλον καταδύναι τὸ σῶμα, *Plut. Conv.* 161d), he is picked up by a dolphin that brings him safely to shore. As we have seen, the dolphin brings Arion to Cape Taenarum, a well-known entrance to Hades. Arion thus accomplishes a symbolic journey through death, but since he only skims the surface, the encounter with death remains merely a brush. Arion returns to the world of the living with a newfound knowledge about the gods (περὶ θεῶν δόξαν βέβαιον "a sure opinion about the gods," *Plut. Conv.* 161e). Similarly, the Lesbian hero Enalus dives into the sea to rescue his beloved, who is about to be sacrificed to Amphitrite. Under the sea, according to Anticleides, Enalus "feeds the horses of Poseidon" (Ποσειδῶνος ἔβοσκεν ἵππους, *Anticlid. FGrH* 140F4 = *Ath.* 11.15, 466c–d) and his girlfriend joins the company of the Nereids. In Plutarch's version of the story, Enalus and his girlfriend are carried back to Lesbos by dolphins. We learn nothing more of the girl's fate, but Enalus becomes a favorite of Poseidon, averting a tidal wave that threatens the island and attended by a

troop of octopods. In this way, Enalus too manages to return to the world of the living with a special status after a dive into the sea. Like Arion and Theseus, Enalus abandons himself to the depths of the sea, but receives the guidance of a dolphin. In contrast, his girlfriend, at least in Anticleides' narrative, disappears from the world of the living after being thrown into the sea. She passes to the "other side" and joins the immortal Nereids.

Divine intervention is necessary for mortals to find their way through the indeterminate space of the sea. Yet, sharp differences characterize the protagonists' relationship to the divine, especially in relation to gender. In the case of Danae, Auge, and Rhoio, gods prompt their expulsion by making them pregnant but later disappear from the scene entirely, leaving the girls to face their fate on the sea. While the gods may intervene *after* a girl's exposure at sea to secure her position, as in the case of Parthenos, Molpadia, and some versions of the story of Auge, the transition at sea is a moment of complete loneliness and abandonment for the heroines. In contrast, their male counterparts Perseus, Theseus, Jason, and many others are actively guided by the divinity during their sea crossings. While some gods are hostile, such as Poseidon against Odysseus, favorable gods always balance their antagonism, such as Athena in the case of Odysseus. These differences in the protagonists' relationship with the divine emphasize the sharp differences in gender roles in Greek society. Females passively endure hardships at sea—and in life—while males actively seek challenges and are actively helped along by the gods.

Divine favor prevents the bodies of those who throw themselves into the sea from being lost, even when they are dead. This is the case with Melicertes and Hesiod, both of whom are precipitated into the sea after their death. Melicertes makes the jump in the arms of his mother Ino after she boils him in a cauldron, and Hesiod's body is thrown into the sea after his murder. In both cases, dolphins recover the bodies and bring them to shore, where the deceased receive heroic honors. The dolphins act as messengers of the gods, who refuse to allow the bodies of their favorites to disappear in the sea. Melicertes becomes the patron hero of the Isthmian Games and receives sacrifices, while the body of Hesiod cures a plague in the city of Orchomenus, where it is buried in the marketplace.

Overall, the sea operates transitions between phases of life and states of existence because it places the protagonists in between life and death. As Versnel explains, those who abandon themselves to their fate, either by self-sacrifice or by a jump into the sea, are no longer in the society of the living.¹⁰ They are in an intermediary state—represented by the sea—and ready to pass to the other side or to return to the world of the living.

The case of Odysseus shows both possible outcomes of mythical sea crossings. While Odysseus is a competent sailor, he is helplessly tossed about on the sea throughout the *Odyssey* (μάλα πολλὰ πλάγχθη "he wandered about very much," *Od.* 1.1–2). In fact, at the very end of his tribulations, Odysseus has lost his ship and is about to drown in the depths. With Leucothea's help, Odysseus manages to get to shore, but his body shows the mark of his passage in the water: σμερδαλέος δ' αὐτῇσι φάνη κεκακωμένος ἄλμῃ "But terrible did he seem to them, all befouled with brine" (*Od.* 6.137). Odysseus's appearance is almost as terrible as that of Glaucus, whose body is made unrecognizable by the salt water, encrusted with shells and barnacles (Plat. *Resp.* 611d). As we have seen, Glaucus's metamorphosis is the sign of his psychological transformation from mortal man to immortal god. Glaucus even acquires the gift of prophecy as a mark of his newfound divine knowledge. Similarly, Odysseus's rough appearance reflects the brush with death and the revelations he has experienced at sea. Moreover, after Odysseus is saved by Leucothea, Athena makes him appear taller and more beautiful than mortal men (*Od.* 6.229–35) so that he can secure the Phaeacians' assistance and finally return to Ithaca. In this episode, Odysseus's successive physical transformations reflect the transformation operated by his passage at sea and the divine favor that ultimately saves him. Odysseus

almost obtains immortality from Calypso, he visits the dead in Hades, and finally comes very close to dying in the water. These experiences and his special knowledge of the world beyond make Odysseus, in the eyes of many scholars, an initiate.¹¹

The *mystai* in the Eleusinian Mysteries experienced something conceived as similar to Odysseus's initiation. When they ran into the sea shouting ἄλαδε μύσται! "into the sea, initiates!" they symbolically gave themselves up to the sea. In fact, Aeschines 3.130 notes that an initiate died during the proceedings in 339 BC. The scholion to the passage specifies that the initiate—or perhaps two initiates—was eaten by a sea creature during the ceremony. The scholiast calls the sea creature a κῆτος "sea monster," which suggests a predatory animal such as a shark. While such dramatic events seem to have remained isolated occurrences or may not have happened at all, the purpose of the ritual is clear. It is a purification ceremony,¹² in which the entire body of the participants is immersed, as well as their offerings—piglets—in preparation for the revelation of the Mysteries. The initiates thus surrendered themselves for a symbolic death that cleansed them and their offerings in such a complete way as to evoke death, and thus prepare them for the life-changing revelation offered in the Eleusinian rites.¹³ Once again, an encounter with death in the sea prepares the way for renewal, in this case the heightened level of consciousness of those who have come into contact with the divine.

The Gods of the Sea

The first divinity that comes to mind when thinking of the sea is, of course, Poseidon. Poseidon received an important cult in relation to sailing and fishing, and many of his sanctuaries were located by the sea.¹⁴ At Sounion and Onchestus, horses were thrown into the sea to honor Poseidon.¹⁵ In myth, Poseidon is one of Odysseus's most powerful antagonists. In this study, we have also noted Poseidon's presence in the story of Arion through the sanctuary at Taenarum and Arion's offering there.¹⁶ Poseidon is also Theseus's father, and the hero visits his underwater palace in order to gain paternal recognition. Finally, Poseidon is the father of many monstrous creatures that populate the sea and its outer reaches on the Ocean, among whom the Cyclops Polyphemus, the horse Pegasus, and the warrior Chrysaor, the latter two of which are born when Perseus decapitates Medusa during his voyage to the Ocean.¹⁷ As the earth shaker, Poseidon rules the seabed, and we have seen him open an underground tunnel for his son Proteus to reach Egypt through the Underworld. Yet, for all his proximity with the Underworld—Poseidon's sanctuary at Taenarum was an entrance to the Underworld as well as his sacred grove in Athens—Poseidon does not rule Hades or the transitional process that leads to it.¹⁸ Rather, Poseidon is associated with the elemental forces of the sea and the crust of the earth. His power appears chaotic and disorganized, and for this reason he often loses contests against divinities that represent the powers of the mind, such as Athena and Apollo.¹⁹ Overall, then, Poseidon plays an important part in this study as the god who represents the unlimited power that resides in the sea and in the deep earth. His monstrous offspring offers a frightening vision of this power.²⁰ Yet, we have not seen Poseidon preside over the transitions and transformations that take place at sea, for the reason that he represents an unchanging force. On a social level, Poseidon represents grown men, especially through his patronage of men's associations and political leagues.²¹ Perhaps for this reason, Poseidon is absent from Bacchylides' narration of the myth of Theseus's recognition and coming-of-age. Theseus meets Poseidon's wife, Amphitrite, and not Poseidon himself at the bottom of the sea. Amphitrite thus seems to appear here as a kourotroplic divinity while Poseidon remains aloof.

On the contrary, Athena shows particular concern for the social transitions that

punctuate men's lives, such as coming-of-age and political leadership. Athena regularly appears throughout this study as the helper of heroes such as Odysseus, Perseus, Heracles, and many others. In the *Odyssey*, Athena pi lots Odysseus's return as the ruler of Ithaca as well as Telemachus' process of coming-of-age. In the story of Perseus, she helps the hero accomplish his exploits and then gain political prominence. Athena also plays a key role in the Argonautic myth, where she directs the building of the Argo.²² Athena's mastery of technology thus allows the impassable barrier of the sea, both physical and imaginary, to be crossed, while simultaneously allowing Jason to accomplish a social transition. Similarly, we have seen Athena carry dead warriors across the waters of the Ocean in funerary iconography, a function that illustrates her association with warlike qualities and glory. As for women, we have seen Athena make a brief but significant appearance in the story of Auge. In one version of the myth, Auge is made a priestess of Athena in order to keep her chaste. However, Heracles rapes her and she becomes pregnant. In another version, Auge hides her baby in the sanctuary of Athena at Tegea, which provokes a plague. As Brûlé suggests, this myth underscores the importance of Athena in girls' rites of passage, especially in rituals where the proceedings were exclusively conducted by females such as the Plynteria and Arrhēphoria.²³ The virginity of the goddess contrasts with the impending marriage and maternity of her servants.

A variety of other gods have appeared in this study to monitor transitions at sea. In particular, Hermes, Apollo, Aphrodite, Eros, and Dionysus all play an important role in the transformations that take place at sea because their divine personalities correspond to the polarities and tensions associated to the sea. Hermes, as the god of transitions between worlds, is an obvious candidate to oversee mortals' transitions at sea. Similarly, Apollo, as a god who communicates with mortals through inspiration, made appearances in the stories of Arion, Icadius, and the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, where he indicates the divine will to mortals using dolphins as intermediaries. In fact, in the *Homeric Hymn*, the god himself takes the shape of a dolphin to announce his divine commands in the foundation narrative of Delphi. As for Aphrodite and Eros, they preside over love, a loss of mental and physical control that the Greeks often associate with a leap into the sea. The Leucadian leap can thus represent both the feeling of falling in love and the curing of love. Similarly, lovers such as Hero and Leander, Alcyone and Ceyx, Aesacus, Polyphemus, Alpheus, and many others throw themselves into the sea in a frenzy of passion. The feeling of abandoning oneself to the depths of the sea parallels the loss of control brought on by intense love. For the same reason, we have seen that Dionysus's worshippers are often represented as dolphins diving into the sea. These animals represent the worshippers' contact with the god, while the loss of mental control brought on by Dionysus is illustrated by the vast, moving, and changing space of the sea. The spinning whirl pools of the water parallel the whirling minds of drunk symposiasts, while the "wine-dark" sea parallels their drink of choice.

Overall, the sea is a space of divine epiphany and revelation, which is precisely the function of the Old Men of the Sea Nereus, Phorcys, and Proteus. These divinities, as well as other related ones such as the Nereid Thetis, the Graeae, and the Titan Oceanus, embody the visual disorientation that occurs at sea. The sea constantly changes color and shape with the weather—calm as a mirror or raging in tempest, and everything in between. Accordingly, the Old Men of the Sea have shape-shifting abilities that allow them to take any form they wish. Lost sailors who cannot find their way in the moving, indeterminate space of the sea must hang on through the gods' metamorphoses in order to obtain a revelation concerning their way home. Significantly, this revelation is much more than an itinerary to a town or coastal settlement. Indeed, the Old Men of the Sea indicate the way beyond the boundaries of mortality. Thus, Menelaus learns not only the way to Sparta from Proteus, but also that he will dwell in the Islands of the Blessed after

his death (*Od.* 4.333–570). Similarly, Heracles and Perseus learn the way to the Garden of the Hesperides (*Apollod.* 2.114–15) and the Stygian Nymphs' cave (*Apollod.* 2.37), respectively. Both of these locations are beyond the reach of ordinary mortals, either in the immortal realm beyond the Ocean or in the Underworld. Finally, Glaucus, who is considered by some to be an Old Man of the Sea, reveals to Heracles that he is not destined to help the Argonauts accomplish their quest, but rather will reach immortality after suffering through his labors.²⁴

In these myths, finding one's way at sea overlaps with finding one's way through different states of life and existence. The Ocean, as the imaginary continuation of the sea in the farthest reaches of the horizon, acts as a gateway to both Hades and Olympus. As an intermediary location, the Ocean houses both paradisiacal and hellish locations, such as the Garden of the Hesperides, the Islands of the Blessed, and the Island of the Gorgons. Similarly, the real sea is both a positive and negative space, where one can experience luck and success or the most dreadful kind of death, one in which the body is lost forever in the depths. Thus the sea—real and imaginary—is a path of communication. Physically, it offers the opportunity to travel and exchange goods and information. From a religious standpoint, it is a space of divine revelation in which the gods show themselves and their will and announce human destiny. Making one's way on the sea is thus no trivial matter. Beside the innumerable physical dangers involved, one might just cross the boundaries of the human condition and attain the unknown space beyond.

NOTES

44. Pl. *Criti.* 110d–112a; *Ti.* 25c–d.
45. West 1997: 493.
46. Paulian 1975; Evans 2005.
47. See Evans 2005: 109. See also Berlan Bajard 1998.
48. Verg. *G.* 1.25–31. See Romm 1992: 158–71. The image of the Ocean was also used in Alexandrian poetry to contrast epic with short-form poetry: see Harrison 2007.
49. Cic. *Fin.* 5.53.
50. Plut. *De Fac.* 26; Avien. *Ora Mar.* 164–65.
51. See McGinn 1994; Kraus 2003; Schmidt 2006.
52. See Tracy 1996.
53. Pind. *Ol.* 2.68; Plin. *HN* 6.37; Mela 3.102.
54. On the connections between Avalon and traditions from Antiquity, see Ahl 1982.
55. Westrem 2001: no. 987, p. 389; Kline 2001. On the representation of Caesar on the Hereford map, see Wiseman 1987.
56. Kugler 2007: map 59/10. See also Honoré of Autun's *Imago Mundi* 1.35; *Lucidarius* 1.61; Gervase of Tillbury, *Otia Imperialia* 2.11; Map of Angelino Dulcert (fl. 1339) in Harley and Woodward 1987: 378 and 410.
57. Viera y Clavijo 1991 [1772]: 45–46.
58. Viera y Clavijo 1991 [1772]: 45–46.
59. See also Ninck 1921. For a general survey of water in Greek culture, see Houle 2010.
60. Gallini 1963: 62.
61. See also Radermacher 1949.
62. This criticism is leveled at Lesky by Starr 1950. See also Raubitschek 1950.
63. Burkert 1979: 6–7. See critique in Neumann 2010.
64. Buxton 1980: 26.

CHAPTER 1

1. Attic red-figure kylix, 510–500 BC, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 01.8024. Vermeule 1979: 180 fig. 1.
2. Chantraine 1999 [1974], s.v. Hals: “vieux nom-racine du sel.” See also Sorba 2008.
3. Chantraine 1999 [1974], s.v. Pelagos: “haute mer, le large”; “sert de terme géographique”; “s’emploie au figuré pour exprimer une grande quantité.”
4. Chantraine 1968, s.v. Thalassa: “terme à la fois le plus usuel et le plus obscur.”
5. Romm 1992: 10–11. For the posterity of this conception, especially in Christian literature, see Schmidt 2006.
6. Cf. Plut. *De Fac.* 934f.
7. E.g., *Od.* 2.370, 13.417–19; *Il.* 9.4–8; Solon 13.43–45 (West). For Roman literature, see Evans 2005.
8. Εὐρέα: *Op.* 507, 650; ἀπείριτος: *Theog.* 109; ἀπείρων: *Theog.* 678.
9. ἀτρύγετος: *Theog.* 241, 696, 737.
10. ἀλμυρός: *Theog.* 107, 965.
11. *Theog.* 131–32; κυμαίνοντος: *Op.* 390; πολυκλύστῳ: *Theog.* 189.
12. *Theog.* 252, 873; *Op.* 620.
13. *Theog.* 233–39. See also Hyg. *Fab.* pr. 7; Apollod. 1.10; schol. Ap. Rhod. *Arg.* 1.1165.
14. Heracles: Apollod. 2.114; Menelaus: *Od.* 4.333–570. See Détéienne 1996 [1967]: 53–67.
15. Chantraine 1968 s.v. Pontus; also Watkins 1985 s.v. “pent-.”
16. House holder and Nagy 1972: 767–68. Summary in Sacks 1989: 45–47.
17. Cf. *Il.* 7.97–89, where Hector imagines that the tomb of a man he has killed will be placed in a prominent location by the sea and spur the spread of his glory, since men will tell the story of how Hector killed the warrior.
18. See Nesselrath 2005: 156–57.
19. See also Diod. Sic. 4.18.5. See Davies 1992.
20. Anticlid. *FGRH* 140F4 = Ath. 11.15, 466 c–d. See also Plut. *Conv.* 163a–d; Myrsil. *FGRH* 477F14 = Plut. *Soll. An.* 984e.
21. See Baslez 2003.
22. Proteus as a marine deity: *Od.* 4.349–570; Verg. *G.* 4.387–95 and 429–529; Ov. *Met.* 2.9 and 8.730–35; Luc. *Dial. Mar.* 4; *Orph. Argon.* 339. Proteus as king of Egypt: Stesich. fr. 16 (Page); Hdt. 2.112–20; Eur. *Hel.* 4–67; Serv. *Aen.* 1.61; Diod. Sic. 1.62.1–4; Conon *FGRH* 26F1.32. See O’Nolan 1960.

23. Apollod. 2.105; Tzetz. ad Lyc. *Al.* 124. Heracles eventually defeats Proteus's sons.
24. Mylonopoulos 2003: 399 observes that Poseidon has power over the deep sea and the deep earth, but not the realm of the dead.
25. Pl. *Grg.* 493b; *Cra.* 403a. Helmet of Hades: *Il.* 5.845; *Scut.* 227.
26. Cf. the interesting paradox in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, 3.8.10. Socrates says that temples and altars should ideally be located in the most conspicuous and most untrodden places "ναοὶς γε μὴν καὶ βωμοὶς χώραν ἔρη εἶναι προωδυστάτην ἥτις ἐμφανεστάτη οὖσα ἀσιμβεστάτη εἴη." Xenophon places the two superlatives in parallel in order to emphasize the contrast between the high visibility of the locations he describes and the invisibility associated with ἀσιμβής.
27. Soph. *OC* 167, 675; Porph. *Abst.* 4.11; Pl. *La.* 183b; *Phdr.* 245a; Arist. *Pr.* 924a5.
28. *Il.* 5.448; Hdt. 5.72; Pind. *Ol.* 7.32; *Pyth.* 11.4; Pl. *Tht.* 162a; Str. 14.1.44.
29. *Anth. Pal.* 6.51.
30. See Grégoire 1949: 89–90 and rebuttal in Edelstein 1954.
31. See Tzetz. ad Lyc. *Al.* 115 and 116 for this explanation of Lycophron's text.
32. Bonnechere 2003: 265–69.
33. See Sophocles *OC* 1590–94. On shrines of Poseidon and the entrance to the Underworld, see Kokkinou 2014: 62.
34. E.g., Pl. *Phdr.* 111d–112a describes how waterways course through the earth in multiple directions. Some flow from the surface to the Underworld, some flow out of the ground to the surface (e.g., springs), and some flow outward to the sea and the Ocean, and finally the Ocean flows inward to the Underworld through the river Styx.
35. These connections are clear in Ps.-Plut. *De Fluv.* 1157e (13.2): a magical plant named *seistros* grows in the river Scamander, which prevents fear at the sight of a ghost (φαντασίαν) or a divine epiphany (θεὸν ὀφθέντα).
36. Ogden 2001; Ogden 2004.
37. Ogden 2001 and 2004.
38. Paus. 1.34.2–4.
39. Diod. Sic. 5.4.2. See Jourdain-Annequin 1989: 520–38.
40. Diod. Sic. 4.25.4; Paus. 2.37.5–6; Tzetz. ad Lyc. *Al.* 212; Hyg. *Poet. astr.* 2.5; Paus. 2.31.2, 2.37.5; Plut. *Is. et Os.* 364e–f; *Ser. Num. Vind.* 566A; Poll. 4.86–87. See Bonnechere 1994: 203 and notes.
41. Paus. 9.20.4.
42. Lucian *Nec. passim*, esp. 7 and 22. Similarly, the philosopher Apollonius of Tyana performed a *katabasis* in the adyton of Trophonios at Lebadeia and came out at Aulis after seven days: Philostr. *VA* 8.19.
43. On the connections between water, the earth, the night, and funerary themes in Homer, see Arnould 1994.
44. See Davies 2004: 254.
45. Vermeule 1979: 179–209.
46. See Georgoudi 1988.
47. Aesch. *Pers.* 578; Eur. *IT* 1193. See Alvar and Romero 2005.
48. *IG XII* 5.593 = *LSCG* 97 A 14–17. See Parker 1983: 38.
49. Paus. 1.24.4, 1.28.11; Porph. *De Abst.* 2.29–31; Theoph. *De Piet.* 18.39 (Pötscher); Ael. *VH* 8.3; *IG* I 839; Ar. *Nub.* 984–85; Photius and Suda, s.v. *peripsema*. See Burkert 1983 [1972]: 136–49; Bremmer 1983; Piettre 2005: 87.
50. Str. 10.2.9. It is not known whether the festival dates back to earlier times or strictly pertains to the Roman period.
51. Parker 1983: 226–27.
52. Ginouvès 1962: 239–42; Parker 1983: 32–48.
53. Marchetti and Kolokotsas 1995: 236–37. Brides descended into the river Scamander in order to offer their virginity to the god: Ps.-Aeschin. *Ep.* 10.3–8. See Gallini 1963: 81.
54. Ginouvès 1962: 265–82.
55. See also *Od.* 24.291. On Homeric formulas expressing the fears attached to navigation, see Sacks 1989: 33–62. To avoid this fate, a complex array of sacrifices and other religious acts was performed before starting on a sea journey. See Wachsmuth 1967 and Corvisier 2008: 344–50. The sentiment is echoed throughout Greek literature, in particular in epigrams. See Radermacher 1949; Vermeule 1979: 179–90; Pearce 1983; Georgoudi 1988; Goyens-Slezakowa 1990–91; Serghidou 1991. For the negative connotations of the sea in the Hellenistic period, see Poliakoff 1980.
56. See Vermeule 1979: 184 with bibliography.

57. Late Geometric oinochoe, ca. 740–20, Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek, inv. no. 8696.
58. *Od.* 23.347; *Mimn.* 11.4 (Westz); *Hymn. Hom. Sel.* 7–8; *Hymn. Hom. Merc.* 68–69; *Hymn. Hom. Hel.* 15–16; *Stesich.* 8.1–3 (Page); *Op.* 566; *Il.* 18.486–89.
59. Ginouvès 1962: 283–98; Kahil 1994. See also Rudhardt 1971: 83–87 for a discussion of the lustrations of celestial bodies in the waters of the Ocean.
60. Islands of the Blessed: *Od.* 4.563–70, 15.403–14; *Op.* 167–75. See also Pind. *Ol.* 2.68–77; *Pl. Phdr.* 249a; *Eur. Hel.* 1676, *Bacch.* 1739. Garden of the Hesperides: *Theog.* 215. See also *Eur. Hipp.* 742.
61. Allusion to these doves in a second-century AD funerary inscription of Philadelphia: Gatiér and Vêrilhac 1989. On the connections between ambrosia and Oceanus, see Rudhardt 1971: 84 and 95–97.
62. See Cook 1940: 980; Bijovsky 2005.
63. On the ambivalence of seawater and its resulting role in initiation rituals, see Duchêne 1992.
64. Luce 1922, studying the representations of Heracles fighting a sea monster (a myth for which we do not have a literary record), has argued that Triton and Nereus are in fact the same character because they are two manifestations of the Old Man of the Sea. Ahlberg-Cornell 1984, esp. 102–3, has followed these conclusions and provided a more detailed analysis of the motif. For the Oriental counter parts (and perhaps models?) of the Old Man of the Sea and sea monsters in general, see Shepard 1940.
65. E.g., Proclus on *Pl. Resp.* 1, p. 112 (Kroll); *Orph. Hymn.* 25 (Quandt). See Rudhardt 1971: 23. Briquel 1985: 145–46 denies any connection between Old Men of the Sea and cosmogony. The derivation of the name Proteus from *πρωτός* is also uncertain. See Chantraine 1999 [1974] s.v. *πρωτός*. Full discussion in Fuhrer 2004.
66. *Apollod.* 3.174; *Ov. Met.* 11. 218–64. Athanassakis 2002 discusses the possible shamanistic characteristics of Proteus in relation to his shape-shifting power. See also Forbes Irving 1992 and Buxton 2009: 168–74.
67. *Theog.* 233–36. See Détienné 1996 [1967]: 53–67.
68. Bloch 1985: 127.
69. *Stesich.* fr. 184a.
70. *Theog.* 240–44; *Il.* 1.358, 18.36, 24.60; Pind. *Pyth.* 3.92; *Apollod.* 1.11.
71. Pind. *Nem.* 4.62–65; *Apollod.* 3.168–70. The theme was particularly popular in Classical art: see LIMC s.v. Thetis (Vollkommer).
72. Heraclit. *All.* 64–67; see Rudhart 1971: 21–23.
73. Doerig 1983: 147.
74. Rudhardt 1971: 70–72.
75. See Aston 2011.
76. LIMC s.v. Okeanos nos. 4–7 (Cahn). Cf. *Eur. Or.* 1377–78: Ὠκεανὸς ταυρόκρανος. On the iconography of Oceanus, see Rudhart 1971: 77; Foucher 1975; Paulian 1975; Tölle-Kastenbein 1992: 447–54; Dietz 1997: 35–43.
77. LIMC s.v. Okeanos nos. 1–3 (Cahn).
78. See Brommer 1971; Foucher 1975.
79. When they are not identified by inscriptions, these gods are virtually indistinguishable. See LIMC s.v. Proteus, Okeanos p. 33, Acheloos nos. 268–81. On the iconography of Acheloos, most of the time represented as a bull or as an old man with horns, see Isler 1970 (with comprehensive cata log). Doerig 1983 believes that the presence of hippalektryones identifies the figures as Oceanus.
80. *Theog.* 238; *Apollod.* 2.27. In *Palaephatus* 31 the Graeae and Gorgons are conflated as the previously accepted names of the Gorgons are now applied to the Graeae, viz. Stheno, Euryale, and Medusa. In *schol. Ap. Rhod. Arg.* 4.1399, the Hesperides instead of the Graeae are the daughters of Phorcys and Ceto. Pindar calls the Graeae the daughters of Phorcys in fr. 70a (Snell-Maehler).
81. *Theog.* 270–76; Pherecydes *FGrH* 3F11; Aesch. *PV* 792–97; *Phoricides* fr. 261 (Radt); Eratosth. *Cat.* 22; *Palaeph.* 31; *Lyc. Al.* 846; *Apollod.* 2.37–38; *Hyg. Fab. Praef.* 9; *Poet. astr.* 2.12. For the iconography of Perseus's visit to the Graeae, see Oakley 1988. In addition, Aesch. *PV* 794–97 indicates that the Graeae are shaped like swans, an appropriate symbol to describe their white hair and old age. In addition, the comparison to swans emphasizes the Graeae's connection with the boundaries of the earth and death, since swans were thought to fly to the land of the Hyperboreans each year, to know the moment of their own death, and, in general, to represent the soul of the dead. On the connection between swans, death, the soul, and the Hyperboreans, see Thévenaz 2004; Bonnechere 2003: 301; Ahl 1982; Arnott 1977.

82. Buxton 1980, updated in Buxton 2013. In *PV* 790–809, Aeschylus says that the Arimaspians, who are likewise one-eyed, live near the Ocean, in the same area as the Graeae. Hdt. 4.13 also says that the Arimaspians are one-eyed, but he locates them north of the Issedones and south of the Hyperboreans.

83. *Theog.* 270–76. See also: *Cypria* fr. 30 (West); Pherecydes *FGrH* 3F11; Palaeph. 31; Suda s.v. Sarpedonia. In Aeschylus's *Phorcydes* fr. 261 Radt, the Graeae actually guard the entrance to the Gorgon's cave. However, in *PV* 790–809, Aeschylus says that the Graeae dwell near the Gorgons. In Erastosthenes' *Catasterismi* 22, the Graeae also guard the approach to the Gorgons.

84. For the association between death and darkness, see Létoublon 2010: 168. On the Graeae and the children of Phorcys and Ceto, see Vernant 1991: 122–25.

85. Apollod. 2.37. For the iconography of Perseus's visit to the Graeae, see Oakley 1988.

86. *Shield* 216–20 and 226–27; Apollod. 2.37; Hyg. *Fab.* 64. See Cursaru 2013 for a detailed analysis of the myth. See *LLMC* s.v. Perseus 87–99 (Jones-Roccos) for representations of the scene where Perseus acquires his equipment from the Nymphs.

87. Pötscher 1998.

88. Pind. fr. 263 (Snell-Maehler); Aesch. *Glaucus Pontius* fr. 25a–31 (Radt); Pl. *R.* 10.611e–612a with schol.; Eur. *Or.* 362–64 with schol.; Ar. fr. 468–76 (*PCG*); Eub. fr. 18–19 (Kock); Antiph. fr. 76 (*PCG* II); Anaxil. fr. 7 (*PCG* II); Palaeph. 27; Ap. Rhod. *Arg.* 1.1310–29, 2.767; Diod. Sic. 4.486; Ov. *Met.* 7.232–33, 13.898–968, 14.1–74; Paus. 9.22.6–7; Plut. *Cic.* 3; Heraclitus *De incr.* 10; Verg. *Aen.* 6.36; Philostr. *Imag.* 2.5; Macrob. *Sat.* 6.5 and 13; Claudian 10.158; Tzetz. ad Lyc. *Al.* 754; Ath. 7.296a–297c; Nonnus *Dion.* 5.356, 43.75 and 115; *Etym. Magn.* s.v. Πλωριάδες θεαί. See Paladino 1978; Deforge 1983; Corsano 1992; Piettre 2002; Beaulieu 2013.

89. Aesch. *Glaucus Pontius* fr. 25a (Radt); Ov. *Met.* 13.949–55.

90. Schol. Ap. Rhod. *Arg.* 2.767. See also schol. Eur. *Or.* 364; Tzetz. ad Lyc. *Al.* 754; Nic. in Ath. 7.296f; *Anth. Pal.* 6.164 (Lucilius).

91. Ps.-Arist. *Const. Delos* (p. 465 Rose) = Ath. 7.296c; Verg. *Aen.* 6.36; Paus. 9.22.6–7; Heraclitus *De incr.* 10.

92. See also Eur. *Or.* 362–65; Ap. Rhod. *Arg.* 2.767 and Diod. Sic. 4.486.

93. According to Ath. 7.48, Glaucus's herb of immortality is a magical plant grown by the earth for Helios on the Islands of the Blessed. Helios gives the plant to his horses to allow them to course through the sky without becoming tired. By eating a plant that comes from the Islands of the Blessed and belongs to Helios, Glaucus passes beyond the darkness of death into immortality.

94. *Il.* 18.607–8; *Scut.* 314; Aesch. *PV* 136–43; fr. 74, 3 (Radt); Apollod. 1.2; Diod. Sic. 5.66. Unfortunately, the etymology of Ὠκεανός remains obscure and cannot help us in understanding the significance of his character in Greek mythology. See Chantraine 1999 [1974] s.v. Oceanus. The word appears to be non-Greek. In the Archaic period, the figure of Acheloo competed with Oceanus as a cosmic stream encircling the earth. It rapidly gave way to the more popular Oceanus but retained a cult, especially at Dodona. See D'Alessio 2004; Isler 1970: 109–20.

95. Constantinidou 2010.

96. *Od.* 11.639, 24.11; *Theog.* 215, 275, 518; Apollod. 2.113.

97. *Theog.* 274–79.

97. Mist is associated with darkness. See, for instance, Hesychius, s.v. ἡεροειδέα: μέλανα. ἢ ἀναπεπταμένον. Σκοτεινόν. On mist in ancient poetry and Pre-Socratic philosophy, see Kingsley 1995: 15–35, 123–25.

98. See also *Od.* 2.263.

99. West 1997: 159 notes that ζόφος is a Semitic loanword derived from *s.bi* signifying the setting of the sun.

100. E.g., *Od.* 11.57; *Hymn. Hom. Dem.* 337.

101. E.g., *Il.* 8.13.

102. *Theog.* 757.

103. E.g., *Od.* 12.80.

104. E.g., *Il.* 5.696.

105. *Op.* 125 and 255.

106. See Kingsley 1995: 123–25; Cauderlier 2000–2001; Perceau 2014.

107. E.g., *Il.* 20.321: Poseidon saves Aeneas on the battlefield while pouring mist (ἀχλὺν) over the eyes of his opponent Achilles.

108. See Marinatos 2010.

109. *Od.* 23.347; *Mimn.* 11.4 (West); *Hymn. Hom. Sel.* 7–8; *Hymn. Hom. Merc.* 68–69; *Hymn. Hom.*

Hel. 15–16; Stesich. 8.1–3 (Page); *Op.* 566; *Il.* 18.486–89.

110. Black-figure attic lekythos, ca. 500 BC, New York, Metropolitan Museum, 41.162.29. The technique used to represent the transparency of the mist is uncommon. According to Ferrari and Ridgway 1981: 143, its closest parallel is the use of transparency to represent the sea in late black-figure vase painting.

111. Ferrari and Ridgway 1981.

112. Cf. Attic black-figure lekythos, 525–475 BC, Athens, National Archaeological Museum (photograph in Alexandri 1968: 47). On this vase, Helios rises in his chariot while his bright nimbus disperses a thick mist, represented as a dark wavy line in the upper area of the field.

113. See Segal 1965: 133.

114. See Nesselrath 2005. Roller 2006: 44–56 discusses the Pillars of Heracles in ancient geography.

115. See also Pind. *Nem.* 3.20–23 and *Isthm.* 4.29–31.

116. See Romm 1992: 17–18.

117. For a discussion of the journey of the dead to the afterlife on Oceanus, see Wagenvoort 1971; Baslez 2003.

118. Athena: Attic black-figure olpe, sixth century BC, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Médailles, inv. 260. Photograph in Vermeule 1979: 176 fig. 28. Eos: Attic red-figure rhyton, fifth century BC, Leningrad 682. Photograph in Vermeule 1979: 166 fig. 17. Harpy: Lycian marble relief, fifth century BC, London, British Museum B287. Photograph in Vermeule 1979: 170 fig. 21.

119. Apollod. 2.37; Hyg. *Fab.* 64.

120. Pind. *Pyth.* 4.250–52. On the Ocean in the earliest versions of the Argonautic myth, see West 2005. However, in Apollonius Rhodius's *Argonautica* 4.637–44, the Argonauts are forbidden to enter the Ocean by Hera. As Romm 1992: 194–95 observes, this choice may have been motivated by Apollonius's desire to distinguish his work from the *Odyssey* while participating in the Alexandrian debates surrounding Homeric poetry.

121. *Od.* 12.70; Eur. *Med.* 3; Apollod. 1.110; Pherecydes *FGrH* F106; Diod. Sic. 4.41.3.

122. Simon. fr. 546 (Page); Pind. *Pyth.* 4.208–11; Eur. *IT* 422; Ap. Rhod. 2.596.

123. Apollod. 1.125; Ap. Rhod. 2.317–44, 2.549–606; Val. Fl. 4.637–710.

124. For the Symplegades as a door to the Underworld, see Davies 1992: 220.

125. Haag-Wackernagel 1998: 64.

126. Hera and Athena's flight compared to that of doves: *Il.* 5.778; Iris: Ar. *Av.* 575; Iris and Eileithyia: *Hymn. Hom. Ap.* 114. On the incorporeal body of the gods, see Vernant 1991: 27–49.

127. Ctesylla dies in labor; during the funeral, her body disappears and a dove flies away: Ant. Lib. *Met.* 1 (citing Nicander); Ov. *Met.* 7.370.

128. Two doves flying from Thebes in Egypt were said to have announced the foundation of the oracles of Zeus at Dodona and in Libya, respectively: Hdt. 2.55; Paus. 7.21.1, 10.12.5; schol. *Il.* 16.233; Soph. *Trach.* 171.

129. Haag-Wackernagel 1998: 65–73. On doves, see Thompson 1895, s.v. πέλεια.

130. Paus. 3.19.11; Apollod. *Epit.* 5, 5a; Ant. Lib. 27.4; Eust. *Dion. Per.* 306.19, 541.13; schol. Eur. *Andr.* 1262; schol. Pind. *Nem.* 4.79a–b.

131. Apollod. 2.74–126; Diod. Sic. 4.11–18; Hyg. *Fab.* 30; *Tab. Alb. FGrH* 1.40; Auson. *Ecl.* 24; Serv. *Aen.* 8.299; Planud. *Anth.* 92.

132. On the choice of Heracles, see Rochette 1998.

133. Attic black-figure lekythos, Eretria, fifth century BC, Athens, National Archaeological Museum, 1132 = *LIMC* s.v. Atlas 7. See also metope from the temple of Zeus at Olympia, Olympia Museum, *LIMC* s.v. Atlas 9 (cf. Paus. 5.10.9), Campanian neck amphora, fifth century BC, London, British Museum F148 = *LIMC* s.v. Atlas 13, sardonyx scarab, 450–430 BC, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 98.736 = *LIMC* s.v. Atlas 17.

134. See Davies 1992 for the Pillars of Heracles as the entrance to the afterlife.

135. Daughters of Atlas: Diod. 4.27; Serv. on Verg. *Aen.* 4.484. Daughters of the Night: *Theog.* 215; schol. Eur. *Hipp.* 742. Daughters of Hesperus (the Eve ning): Serv. on Verg. *Aen.* 4.484. Daughters of Oceanus: Ap. Rhod. *Arg.* 4.138, see Korenjak 2000.

136. Stesich. S 8 (Page); *Theog.* 275, 518; Mimn. fr. 12 (West); Eur. *Hipp.* 742.

137. Mela 3.31; Plin. *HN* 4.89.

138. Classical lekythos from Gela, drawing in Jourdain-Annequin 1989: 539 and Brommer 1942b: 1a. Cf. lekythos, Paestum, ca. 350 BC, Naples, Museo Nazionale 81847 = *LIMC* s.v. Hesperides no. 36.

139. Díez de Velasco 2000 shows that the episode is represented as such in vase painting, with the tree of the Hesperides marking the axis of the universe and the gateway toward the world of the

- gods. On the iconography of Heracles in the garden of the Hesperides, see Brommer 1942b.
140. Jourdain-Annequin 1989: 520–37, 561–66. See also Jourdain-Annequin 1998.
 141. Erytheia: Hes. fr. 360 (Merkelbach-West); Erytheis: Ap. Rhod. *Arg.* 4.1427.
 142. Str. 3.2.11.
 143. On the location of Erytheia, see Apollod. 2.106; Str. 3.2.11.
 144. Jourdain-Annequin 1989: 520–38. On the representations of Heracles' quest for Cerberus as the transgression of a boundary, see Chazalon 1995.
 145. Pherecydes *FGrH* F18a = Ath. 11.470c–d; Stesich. fr. 185 (Page); Aesch. *Herakleidae* fr. 74 *TrGF*; Apollod. 2.107. Figurative representations: olpe, southern Italy, 510–500 BC, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 03.783 = *LIMC* s.v. Herakles 2550; cup, from Ialysos, ca. 500 BC, Rhodes Museum = *LIMC* s.v. Herakles 2551; cup, from Vulci, 490–480 BC, Vatican 16563 = *LIMC* s.v. Herakles 2552.
 146. Lekythos, Eretria, 510–500 BC, Athens, National Archeological Museum 513 = *LIMC* s.v. Herakles 2545; skyphos, Tarentum, 500–475 BC, Taranto, Museo Nazionale 7029 = *LIMC* s.v. Herakles 2546; lekythos, 500–475 BC, Oxford, Ashmolean Museum 1934.371 = *LIMC* s.v. Herakles 2549.
 147. *LIMC* s.v. Geras (Shapiro). For Geras as the personification of the negative aspects of old age as opposed to its positive counterpart the Old Man of the Sea, see Détienne 1996 [1967]: 59.
 148. On Heracles' apotheosis in ancient literature and art, see Holt 1992; Winiarczyk 2000. On the iconography of his wedding with Hebe as a representation of the restoration of order between the mortal and immortal worlds, see Laurens 1996.
 149. Cf. Mela 3.31; Plin. *HN* 4.89: the Hyperboreans live on the *cardines mundi*, “the hinges of the world.”
 150. E.g., Soph. *Trach.*; Cic. *Tusc.* 2.20.
 151. Marinatos 2001.
 152. Constantinidou 2010: 93.
 153. On Odysseus's return from the world of the dead, see Breed 1999.
 154. On the successive disguises of Odysseus, see Galhac 2006.
 155. On Odysseus's “epiphany” in the *Odyssey*, see Bierl 2004.
 156. For Odysseus's voyage as an initiation, see Scarpi 1988; Duchêne 1992: 120; Moreau 1994b; Dowden 1999.
 157. Nesselrath 2005: 164.

CHAPTER 2

1. The classic study on the conventional nature of Pindar's poetry is Bundy 1962. On the formal conventions of Pindar's epinicians, see Hamilton 1974; Greengard 1980. On the question of unity in Pindar's odes, see Gantz 1970; Carne-Ross 1975; Barkhuizen 1976; Schein 1987. On the history of Pindaric criticism, see Heath 1986. On Pindar's narrative techniques and use of myths, see Duchemin 1955 and 1967; Köhnken 1971; Rose 1974; Slater 1977 and 1983; Cummins 1993. On Bacchylides, see Percy 1976; Burnett 1985; Segal 1998; Fearn 2007.
2. Kurke 1991.
3. Rose 1974: 175.
4. See Puech 1951: 141–45.
5. See Dillon 1989: 25. According to Gantz 1993: 311 the fact that Perseus was the father of Electryon, who was the father of Alcmena, can be gleaned as early as the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, fr. 135 and 193 (Merkelbach-West). See also Apollodorus 2.49.
6. See Hamilton 1985 ad loc. See also Pind. *Nem.* 1.28, 3.40, etc.
7. Similar metaphor at *Isthm.* 6.12–13: ἐσχατιαῖς ἤδη πρὸς ὄλβου βάλλετ' ἄγκυραν θεότιμος ἑών.
8. *Ol.* 3.43; *Nem.* 3.20–23, 4.69; *Isthm.* 4.29–31; fr. 256 (Snell-Maehler).
9. See Duchemin 1955: 112 n. 2.
10. Kirkwood 1982: 241.
11. Köhnken 1971: 186–87. Radt 1974: 119 points out that, while the metaphor of the winged song is common in Pindar (as well as in other archaic poetry such as the *Theognidea*), it is not used specifically in *Pythian* 10, and therefore this meaning cannot be applied to the passage with certainty. Pindar rather uses the metaphor of a ship to describe his poem in *Pythian* 10 (lines 79–81). However, Radt's own suggestion that ναῦσι δ' οὐτε πεζὸς signifies “auf keine Weise” is much too restrictive, especially in the vicinity of πλόον and ὁδόν. Similarly, Burton 1962: 7 interprets the phrase as “by no method of transport at all,” but suggests that ναῦσι determines the choice of the word πλόον to effect

a verbal transition in which the first image conditions the next.

12. Burton 1962: 8; Brown 1992: 95; cf. Kirkwood 1982: 242. However, Brown overinterprets the scholion to Pindar's *Ol.* 3. 28a when he says that Thessalians and Hyperboreans were identified in Antiquity. Rather, the scholion indicates that there was controversy over the origin of the Hyperboreans' namesake. The options were Athenian, Thessalian, or Pelasgian, or that the Hyperboreans were from the stock of the Titans.

13. Burton 1962: 7.

14. According to Strabo (15.57), they lived for a thousand years.

15. Pliny *HN* 4.89; Pomponius Mela 3.32.

16. Köhnken 1971: 177–78, following Wilamowitz, has interpreted the myth of Perseus's visit to the Hyperboreans as a reward for his exploits, and therefore affirms that the episode takes place after the hero's return to Seriphos. However, despite the (perhaps deliberate; see Van den Berge 2007) ambiguity of Pindar's chronological representation of the myth, Slater 1983: 128–29 has demonstrated that the visit to the Hyperboreans occurs before Perseus's return to Seriphos. Besides his analysis of the ring-composition structure of the myth, Slater points out that in the entirety of the preserved tradition about Perseus, Seriphos is the end point of Perseus's adventures. Therefore, it would be unexpected (although not impossible) that the Hyperborean episode take place *after* the hero's return to Seriphos. See also Hamilton 1974: 62; Kirkwood 1982: 243.

17. Perseus is said to wear winged sandals as early as the Hesiodic *Shield* 216–34. The earliest representations of Perseus show him in winged sandals or with a winged cap and date back to the seventh century BC: see *LIMC* s.v. Perseus, esp. p. 345 (Jones-Roccos). On the significance of Hermes and Perseus's sandals, see Cursaru 2012 and 2013.

18. This tradition may be the origin of Heraclitus's rationalization (*Incred.* 9), which suggests that Perseus did not have winged shoes, but was really just a very fast runner. See Dillon 1989: 25 with nn. 121 and 122.

19. See Duchemin 1955: 255–57. Cf. Pindar fr. 70d (Snell-Maehler), a dithyrambic (?) fragment that apparently recounts Perseus's Gorgon mission and subsequent vengeance over the Seriphians with the help of Hermes and Athena.

20. Apollod. 2.48.

21. Ogden 2008: 21–22.

22. Δαίμωνος ὀρνύντος (line 10), κατ' αἴσαν (line 26).

23. This rather strange but bold answer may have a parallel in Pherecydes' account of Jason's quest. In schol. Pind. *Pyth.* 4.133 = Pher. *FGrH* 3F105, Pelias, after noticing Jason's single sandal, asks the young hero what he would do in his own position. Jason responds that he would send him to fetch the Golden Fleece from Aeetes' kingdom.

24. See Frazer 1921: xviii–xix.

25. Cf. Pind. *Pyth.* 12.14: λυγρόν ἔρανον.

26. The altar also appears in Theon's notice on Pindar's *Pythian* 12: *Pap. Oxy.* 31.2536 (Turner).

27. Cf. Paus. 2.18.1: he writes that there was an altar of Dictys and the Nereid Clymene at Athens, who were called the saviors of Perseus. Karamanou 2006: n. 238 follows Frazer 1898: 1.572 and maintains that this altar was located in Seriphos instead of Athens.

28. Ogden 2008: 27. See also Vernant 1991: 135; Gantz 1993: 303; Wilk 2000: 243 n. 1.

29. This element of aristocratic competition is absent from Hyg. *Fab.* 64. According to Hyginus, Polydectes was afraid of Perseus's prowess and set a trap for him after his return to Seriphos with Andromeda. However, Perseus discovers Polydectes' plan and turns him to stone with the Gorgon's head.

30. Cf. *Anth. Pal.* 3.11.

31. See Köhnken 1971: 178–79 and Slater 1983: 131.

32. E.g., Kirkwood 1982: 242.

33. See Dillon 1989: 27.

34. In Apollodorus 2.37, Perseus is ashamed to take Acrisius's throne because he has murdered him, so he trades with his cousin Megapenthes and becomes king of Tiryns, while also fortifying Mideia and Mycenae. See also Paus. 2.16.2. In Hyginus 275.5 and 275.7, Perseus is credited with founding the cities of Perseis and Mycenae. A further episode of Perseus's kingship is the curious myth of his war with Dionysus. See Dillon 1989: 161–200 and Ogden 2008: 28–32.

35. Apollodorus 2.49 writes that Perseus and Andromeda are the parents of Perses, the ancestor of the Persians, and of six other children, including Electryon, Heracles' maternal grandfather. See also Hdt. 7.61 and 150; Hellan. *FGrH* 4F60; schol. Dion. Per. 1053.

36. Kirkwood 1982: 243.
37. Cf. Ov. *Met.* 4.697–705 on Perseus and Andromeda.
38. See Maehler 2004: 172–73. Schmidt 1990 reviews the evidence for both possibilities, and eventually argues that the poem may have been a *hyporchema*.
39. Maehler 2004: 172–75.
40. Fearn 2007: 242 with bibliography. Schmidt 1990: 30–31 notes some verbal similarities between *Ode* 17 and Aeschylus's *Persae*, which may indicate imitation on the part of Bacchylides. Schmidt considers it improbable that Bacchylides would have seen the play performed in Athens in 472, but he may have seen it in Syracuse in 469, which would allow dating *Ode* 17 shortly after 469.
41. Maehler 2004: 174.
42. *LIMC* s.v. Theseus 219–27 (Neils).
43. Fearn 2007: 242–56. See also Scodel 1984: 137 with earlier bibliography.
44. However, see Schmidt 1990: 29–30, who insists on the pan-Ionian importance of the myths of Theseus and points out that many other Ionian *poleis* had their own versions of the Theseus myth that predated the Athenian ones.
45. Fearn 2007: 247.
46. See Scodel 1984: 142.
47. Segal 1979: 36–37.
48. At 3.216 Apollodorus lists only Aegeus as the father of Theseus.
49. See Chapter 3.
50. See Dillon 1989: 12–13 with bibliography.
51. Bonnechere 2007.
52. Paus. 2.30.3, 3.14.2, 8.2.4, 9.40.3. Hesych. s.v. Aphaia; Ant. Lib. 40; Diod. Sic. 5.76.3–4. On Aphaia, see Chapter 5.
53. See, for instance, Ps.-Plut. *De Fluv.* 1157E. On fear at epiphany, see Richardson 1979 [1974]: 208–9, 252.
54. Bonnechere 2007.
55. See Sophocles *OC* 1590–94; Bonnechere 2007: 23 n. 49.
56. Ap. Rhod. *Arg.* 1.101–4. See Bonnechere 2007: 25.
57. Maehler 2004: 183.
58. Segal 1979: 34.
59. Cf. the story of Enalus (Chapter 4) where the young hero dives into the sea to save his beloved. During the dive, the couple become invisible (ἀφανείς) and later Enalus reappears (φασιν φανῆναι) with a golden cup in hand (Ath. 466 c–d, Plut. *Conv.* 163c).
60. E.g., Segal 1979: 31–31; Brown 1992.
61. Scodel 1984: 141.
62. Danek 2008.
63. Segal 1979: 23.
64. See Segal 1979 with bibliography.
65. *LIMC* s.v. Theseus 219–27 (Neils).
66. Hyg. *Astr.* 2.5: “quo tempore Liber ad Minoa venit, cogitans Ariadnen comprimere, hanc coronam ei muneri dedit; qua delectata, non recusavit condicionem.” Many of the manuscripts read “conditionem stupri.” Cf. schol. Verg. *G.* 222: the crown was the price of Ariadne's virginity.
67. See also Paus. 1.17.2.
68. Hyginus cites the *Cretica* and *Argolica* as sources for his second and fourth alternative explanations of the origin of the constellation. According to Le Boeuffe 1983: 158 nn. 4 and 6, the *Cretica* may be the work Eratosthenes praises in *Cat.* 27. The authorship and date of the *Argolica* are unclear, but Le Boeuffe suggests that Istros may have been Hyginus's source here.
69. Paus. 1.17.3.
70. Scodel 1984.
71. On the connections between diving and sexuality, see Segal 1979: 34; Nagy 1990: 223–62.
72. See Janko 1980 for Poseidon Hippios.
73. Ar. *Ran.* 1317–19 with schol.
74. Pind. fr. 125, 69–71 (Bowie); Ar. *Ran.* 1345; Eratosth. *Catast.* 1.31, 21; *Anth. Pal.* 7.214, 3; Plut. *Conv.* 162f; *Soll. An.* 984b; Ael. *NA* 12.45; Solin. 12.6.
75. See Calame 1996: 229–30.
76. See Graf 1979.
77. Braswell 1988: 6.

78. See also Segal 1986: 9.
79. See Segal 1986: 12–14.
80. Braswell 1988: 3–5.
81. Braswell 1988: 1–6; Gerber 1989: 182.
82. For the Argonautic myth before Pindar, see Braswell 1988: 6–23; Gantz 1993: 340–73. For the relationship between the early Argonautic myths and the *Odyssey*, see West 2005.
83. Pindar recounts different myths of the foundation of Cyrene in *Pythians* 5 and 9. See Calame 2003: 35–66 for a comparative analysis of the foundation narratives.
84. Segal 1986: 57 points out that Jason's long hair and panther skin, as well as his education in the wild with Chiron, mark him out as a typical ephebe in the process of coming-of-age.
85. See Segal 1986: 66–67. The story of Tityus also recalls the theme of sexual moderation developed in Bacchylides 17.
86. See Brown 1992: 333.
87. On the single sandal motif, especially in the context of coming-of-age, see Brelich 1955–57; Dillon 1989: 68; Cursaru 2012.
88. Scodel 1984: 140–41.
89. On this passage, see Dodd 1999: 74.
90. Mackie 2001 suggests that Jason's name means "healer" and that the earliest myths in which he was cast presented him as a heroic healer. For this reason, he insists on the role of Jason as healer in Pindar's narrative and writes that the hero is an appropriate mythical analogue for Arcesilaus, who can heal the suffering of the exile Demophilus and Cyrene as a whole. For Jason as healer in *Pythian* 4, see also Segal 1986: 159–61; Braswell 1988: 370–72.
91. Segal 1986: 53–54 notes that the heroic and the erotic are intertwined in this passage in the context of the heroes' coming-of-age.
92. Segal 1986: 56–57.
93. Sullivan 1991: 176 suggests that in this context, bringing back the *psyche* of Phrixus means to bring back his bones for burial in his homeland and that this action will also in some way bring back his shade and give it peace. Burkert 1998: 68 and 205 n. 42 sees shamanistic elements in the episode.
94. *Od.* 12.62; Moero fr. 1 (Powell) = *Ath.* 410e, 491b–c.
95. The island is sacred to Achilles: Eur. *Andr.* 1262 with schol.; Scyl. 68.14; Ptol. *Geog.* 3.10.9; Paus. 3.19.11; Procl. *Chr.* 200; St. Byz. *Ethn.* 152.10; Tzetzes *Chil.* 11.396.
96. Antig. *Mir.* 122.1; Arr. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 21.1–4; Eur. *IT* 434–38; *Et. Gen.* s.v. Leukê; *Etym. Magn.* s.v. Leukê; Tzetzes ad Lyc. *Al.* 186; schol. Pind. *Nem.* 4.79a–b.
97. Helen, Ajax, Antilochus, and Patroclus: Paus. 3.19.11; Medea: Apollod. *Epit.* 5, 5a; Iphigeneia: Ant. Lib. 27.4; Eust. *Dion. Per.* 306.19, 541.13; schol. Eur. *Andr.* 1262; schol. Pind. *Nem.* 4.79a–b. Cf. Pind. *Nem.* 4.49; Eur. *Andr.* 1260–62.
98. Philostr. *Her.* 746.10.
99. Achilles appeared as a ghost: schol. Pind. *Nem.* 4.79a–b.
100. Mackie 2001 (with earlier bibliography).
101. Cf. *Theog.* 352.
102. Segal 1986: 78.
103. Segal 1986: 84.
104. Graf 2009: 104.
105. *Anth. Pal.* 6.278.
106. See Redfield 2003.
107. See Lincoln 2003; Graf 2003. Cf. in Pind. *Ol.* 1.71, Pelops descends by the sea to ask Poseidon to favor his marriage with Hippodameia. In Pind. *Ol.* 6.58, Iamus descends into the river Alpheius to ask his grandfather Poseidon for recognition, and he is granted the gift of prophecy by Apollo.
108. Cf. the Roman practice of the "ver sacrum" in which youths are said to be sacrificed when they are exiled to found new colonies. See Versnel 1980: 149–50.
109. See Foley 2001.
110. Ferrari 2002: 200–201.

CHAPTER 3

1. *Il.* 14.319 and schol.; Pherecydes *FGRH* 3F10 = schol. Ap. Rhod. 4.1091; Apollod. 2.34–35; Hyg. *Fab.* 63, 155, 224; Zenob. *Cent.* 1.41; schol. Luc. Gall. 13 (Rabe); Myth. Vat. 1.154.2.133; schol. Lyc. *Al.* 838.

2. Eur. *Archelaus* fr. 228b.7 (Kannicht); Paus. 2.23.7, 10.5.11; Dio Chrys. *Or.* 77–78.31; Prop. 2.31.29; Luc. *Men.* 2; *Salt.* 44; Ael. *NA* 12.21; Lib. *Or.* 34.29; *Prog.* 2.41; Nonnus *Dion.* 47.543; Ov. *Am.* 3.4.21; Hor. *Carm.* 3.16.1; according to Ovid, Danae was locked in a tower: *Ars Am.* 3.416; *Am.* 2.19.27. See Karamanou 2006: 10–11 for a discussion of the bronze decoration in Danae's chamber.

3. See Bremmer 1983.

4. Schol. *Il.* 14.319 (attributes the alternative version of the myth to Pindar). Apollod. 2.34 reports both alternatives.

5. See Karamanou 2006: 8; Ogden 2008: 23.

6. Many fragments of Euripides' *Danae* and *Dictys* and one fragment of Sophocles' *Danae* attest that love and trust among family members and the peaceful succession of generations was an important theme of the myth as interpreted by tragedians in the fifth century: Soph. *Danae*, fr. 165 (Radt); Eur. *Danae*, fr. 317, 318, 323 (Nauck); *Dictys*, fr. 332, 333, 336, 338, 345, 346 (Nauck). See Dillon 1989: 28.

7. Acrisius's refusal to believe Danae on this point also appears in schol. *Il.* 14.319 and Apollod. 2.35. In Ov. *Met.* 4.612–18, Acrisius regrets his disbelief once Perseus has conquered the Gorgon's head.

8. Karamanou 2006: 4.

9. Lucas 1993: 43 mentions a fragment of a fifth-century white-ground lekythos (*LIMC* s.v. Acrisios, 10, Jean-Jacques Maffre) on which the king (identified by an inscription) sits in a mourning pose on a monument identified by the inscription as Perseus's tomb. It is possible that the vase represents a lost tragedy. According to Maffre, this curious monument could be a representation of Danae's prison, which, of his own admission, does not explain the label "Perseus," or it could be a cenotaph elevated by Acrisios after the exposure of his daughter and grandson at sea. Whatever the case may be, this vase painting underscores the fact that Acrisius intends to kill both Danae and Perseus. Junker 2002: 18 interprets the vase as a funerary vessel and notes that Danae and Perseus's rescue in the story adds a comforting note to the funereal theme.

10. On the importance of justice and judicial processes in the story, see Cursaru 2014.

11. Sissa 1990: 78.

12. Dem. *Against Neaera* 122. See Redfield 1982; Ogden 1996; Ferrari 2002: 184, 200–201; Mehl 2009: 205.

13. Sébillotte Cuchet 2004: 145–46; Hoffmann 1992: 161.

14. Apollod. 2.47.

15. Karamanou 2006: 130–31 considers that Hyginus's source was probably Alexandrian, since his version of the story does not accord with the narrative found in tragedy. See Bremmer 1984 and Dillon 1989: 14 on the role of temples and priests in the coming-of-age of the youth.

16. In Hyginus's *Fabulae* 63, Perseus is rather passive and does not have to prove his lineage and conquer his inheritance by force. However, Hyginus indicates later in *Fabulae* 244 that Perseus was eventually killed by Megapenthes for the murder of his uncle Proetus (Megapenthes' father), who had usurped the Argive throne from Acrisius (see Ov. *Met.* 5.236–39).

17. Serv. ad Verg. *Aen.* 7.372; Plin. *HN* 3.9, 56; Sil. It. 1.659; Solin. 2.5; Lact. ad Stat. *Theb.* 2.220.

18. Karamanou 2006: 16–17.

19. Pind. *Pyth.* 12.17 with scholia; Aesch. *Persae* 79–80; Soph. *Ant.* 950; Eur. *Archelaus* fr. 228 (Kannicht); Isoc. *Hel. Enc.* 59; Lyc. *Al.* 838; *Anth. Pal.* 5.64, 9.48, 12.20; Erat. *Cat.* 22; Ter. *Eun.* 588; Ov. *Met.* 4.610–11, 4.697–98, 11.117; *Am.* 3.12.33; Lucan. 9.659; Stat. *Silv.* 1.2.134–36; Hyg. *Fab.* 63; Dio Chrys. *Or.* 57–58.31; Lucian. *Iupp. trag.* 2.7; Ach. Tat. 2.37.2. See Karamanou 2006: 4 n. 9 for a list of additional later sources.

20. See also Pherecydes (*FGrH* 3F10 = schol. Ap. Rhod. 4.1091).

21. Marchetti and Kolokotsas 1995: 241.

22. See Larson 2001, esp. chaps. 2 and 3.

23. Marchetti and Kolokotsas 1995: 233–42.

24. Lissarague 1996. Seaford 1987: 120 points out the associations in Greek literature between rain and semen.

25. Pfisterer-Haas 2002.

26. See also Romano 2009 for a discussion of the inscription of Halicarnassus, which states that Hermaphroditus is the inventor of marriage and that Salmacis "tames the savage minds of men." In view of Pfisterer-Haas 2002, it is striking to see that the locus of sexual union represented by the myth of Hermaphroditus is a spring and that the institution of marriage, according to the inscription, is attributed to him. Also, according to Hecataeus of Miletus *FGrH* F29b, Heracles raped Auge at a

spring near the temple of Athena in Tegea.

27. Medea may also have been remembered at her *thalamos*: schol. Ap. Rhod. *Arg.* 4.1217. See Larson 1995: 11, 186 n. 82.

28. Schol. *Il.* 14.319; Hes. fr. 135; Simon. fr. 543 (*PMG*); Ap. Rhod. *Arg.* 4.1091; Hyg. *Fab.* 63; Luc. *Dial. Mar.* 12.1, 14.1; Ach. Tat. 2.36, 4.37.4; Lib. *Prog.* 2.41; Nonnus *Dion.* 10.113.

29. *Il.* 24.795; Ant. Lib. 33.3; Thuc. 2.34; *Anth. Pal.* 7.478, 9.278; Suda s.v. *Iarnax*; see Glotz 1904: 16. See also Brûlé 1987: 125 for a table of all vessels used in this way.

30. Brûlé 1987: 125. See also Lissarrague 1996: 110; Moreau 1999: 124–25; Cursaru 2014: 367.

31. Glotz 1904 and McHardy 2008 argue that the exposure in the chest is a form of ordeal intended to determine whether Danae is lying about her rape by Zeus or to punish the loss of her virginity. Nothing in our sources suggests such an intention on the part of Acrisius, but the outcome of the experience vindicates Danae and may therefore have been interpreted as a form of ordeal by ancient audiences. See Cursaru 2014.

32. Garland 1985: 49–50.

33. Red-figure Athenian lekythos, ca. 480 BC, *CVA, LIMC* s.v. Danae, 53 = Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, 25.084.

34. Funerary rites and mourning take place while birds fly overhead: Athenian black-figure plaque, *CVA*, Tübingen, Antikensammlung des archäologischen Instituts, 2, 60, pl.(2145) 44.1; Athenian black-figure plaque, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 27.146.

35. Vermeule 1979: 8–9.

36. Junker 2002: 15–19.

37. Apollod. 1.47; Ov. *Met.* 1.319–415. See Glotz 1979 [1904]: 24; Usener 1899.

38. Brûlé 1987: 134.

39. Apollod. 1.115; Ap. Rhod. 1.620–23; Hyg. *Fab.* 15, 254. See Glotz 1904: 24 and n. 1.

40. Apollod. 3.65; Hypoth. Pind. *Nem.* I.

41. See also Dillon 1989: 36 who suggests that the story of Thoas represents an inversion of the typical pattern of exposure of a mother and her child in a chest.

42. See Tassignon 2001 and Chapter 6.

43. See Larson 2001: 223–24.

44. Cf. the story according to which the Nymphs (or the Muses) send bees to the little Plato: Larson 2001: 224 and 229.

45. See Cursaru 2014.

46. A similar description of Danae's relationship with Polydectes may have come earlier in the poem in lines 14–15: φύτευεν ματρί[] .αν λέχεά τ' ἀνα[γ]καῖα δολ.

47. See also Apollodorus 2.36: βασιλευὼν δὲ τῆς Σερίφου Πολυδέκτης ἀδελφὸς Δίκτηος, Δανάης ἐρασθεῖς, καὶ ἡνδρωμένου Περσέως μὴ δυνάμενος αὐτῇ συνελθεῖν. The terms ἐρασθεῖς and συνελθεῖν indicate that Polydectes is seeking not marriage but rather a sexual union with Danae. For the rare depictions of this part of the myth in art, see Oakley 1982b.

48. Other comic treatments of the myth of Danae include Sannyrion *Danae*, fr. 8 and 10 *PCG*; Eubulus *Danae* fr. 22 *PCG*; Apollonphanes test. 1 *PCG*. See Karamanou 2006: 13–15.

49. Sommerstein 2008: 55 n. 8.

50. Eur. *Danae* fr. 410, 418 (Mette), *Dictys* fr. 426, 432.

51. Ruiz de Elvira 2002; Karamanou 2006: 15. See Prop. 2.20.9–12; 2.32.59–60; Ov. *Am.* 3.8.29–34; *Met.* 5.11–12; Rut. Naman. 1.360; Tiberianus 2.7ff.; Servasius 2.7; Paulus Sil. *Anth. Pal.* 5.217.

52. Antigonos *FGrH* 816F2; Liv. 1.11.5–9; Ov. *Met.* 14.776; Ov. *Fast.* 1.261; Val. Max. 9.6.1; Plut. *Ant. Rom.* 17; Cass. Dio fr. 4.12.

53. E.g., *Danae* fr. 326 (Nauck). Jouan and Van Looy ad loc. note that this sentiment is also found in many other plays of Euripides, for instance *El.* 253; *Or.* 870; *Ion* 833–34, etc. Similar reflections are expressed in *Danae* fr. 325, 327, 328 (Nauck), as well as in *Dictys* 341 (Nauck).

54. Soph. *Ant.* 775–76.

55. E.g., Soph. *Ant.* 804, 815–16, etc. On the bride of Hades motif, see Bérard 1974: 124–25; Janakieva 2005; Seaford 1987; Treusch-Dieter 1997. For a critique of the “marriage to death” motif, see Ferrari 2003.

56. Cf. for instance Soph. *Ant.* 879–80.

57. Cf. Soph. *Ant.* 940–43. See McDevitt 1990: 35.

58. Fifth-century Athenian pyxis, London, British Museum, 1873, 0111.7. See Ferrari 2002: fig. 2; Mangieri 2010: figs. 1 and 2.

59. Mangieri 2010: 432.

60. Mangieri 2010: 436. On the iconography of wool working and its significance for women, see Ferrari 2002: 35–60.
61. See Ferrari 2002: 2.
62. *Od.* 11.262; Apollod. 3.42–43; Paus. 2.6.1–4, 9.17.3–7; Hyg. *Fab.* 7 and 8; Eur. *Antiope* fr. 1–48 (Jouan and Van Looy); Ov. *Met.* 6.111.
63. *Od.* 18.83 and 116 with schol.; 21.307; Ap. Rhod. 4.1093; Eustath. ad. *Od.* vol. 2, p. 169 Stallbaum.
64. Lissarague 1996: 112.
65. On the Proetids and marriage, see Dowden 1989: 71–96. On the Danaids in Argive mythology, see Larson 1995: 74.
66. Alcld. fr. 14–16 (Radermacher). The man who travels silently from Tegea to Mysia in Aristotle *Poet.* 1460a32 is commonly understood to be Telephus, who kept silent because he was polluted by the murder of his uncles. It is unclear whether Aeschylus or Sophocles wrote the play Aristotle is critiquing in this passage.
67. Dowden 1989: 131–33, following Bremmer, interprets this priesthood as the evolution of the position of the original leader of the group of youth in the process of coming-of-age. However, according to Dowden, by making Auge the perpetual priestess of Athena, Aleos condemns her to remain a perpetual child, as she will never complete the transition to adulthood.
68. *Pap. Oxy.* 11.1359 = Hes. fr. 165 (Merkelbach-West); Aesch. *Mysians, Telephus* (143–44, 238–39 Nauck); Eur. *Auge, Telephus* (265–81, 696–727 Nauck); Soph. *Aleas, Mysians* (74–96, 375–91 Nauck); Eubulus *Auge* fr. 14 PCG; Apollod. 2.146–47; Paus. 8.4.7, 10.28.8; Strab. 12.8.2 and 4, 13.1.69; Hyg. *Fab.* 99, 100, 101, 162, 252; Sen. *HO* 366–68; Stat. *Silv.* 3.1.39–42. representations of the myth are found on a few vases, reliefs, mosaics, coins, and statues from the fourth century BC down to the Antonine period; see LIMC s.v. Auge (Bauchhenss-Thüriedl). For the ritual connection between the myth and iconography of Auge, see Brûlé 1996.
69. Apollod. 2.103–4; Paus. 8.48.7; Diod. Sic. 4.33, 7–12; schol. Lyc. *Al.* 206.
70. Hecataeus of Miletus *FGrH* F29a–b; Strab. 13.1, 69.
71. Apollod. 2.146–47; Paus. 8.48.7; Diod. Sic. 4.33, 7–12; Hyg. *Fab.* 99; schol. Lyc. *Al.* 206.
72. *Pap. Oxy.* 11.1359 = Hes. fr. 165 (Merkelbach-West); Hyg. *Fab.* 99, 100.
73. Apollod. 3.104; Diod. Sic. 4.33, 7–12; Hyg. *Fab.* 100.
74. See Note 68.
75. Eur. *Danae* (Nauck 316–30); *Dictys*; Soph. *Acisius*; *Danae* (Nauck 168–77); *Men of Larissa*; Aesch. *Net-Haulers*; *Polydectes*. For a list of all ancient dramas (including Roman plays) dealing with the Perseus and Danae myths, see Dillon 1989: 201–43.
76. Hecataeus of Miletus *FGrH* F29a–b; Alcld. fr. 14–16 (Radermacher); Apollod. 2.103–4; 3.103–4; Paus. 8.4.7, 10.28.8; Strab. 13.1, 69; Diod. Sic. 4.33, 7–12; schol. Lyc. *Al.* 206.
77. See Cursaru 2014: 381.
78. Fragment of a Gallo-Roman terracotta relief medallion, Lyon, LIMC s.v. Danae 59 (Maffre); silver coin of Marcus Aurelius, Elaia (harbor of Pergamon, Aeolia), AD 161–80, LIMC s.v. Auge 26 (Bauchhenss-Thüriedl).
79. Cf. the story of Theaneira, Lyc. *Al.* 467 and schol. 467–69; Istros *FGrH* 334F57. Theaneira is a captive Trojan woman who escapes Telamon's ship by jumping into the sea. She lands in Miletus and marries king Arion, who fosters her son by Telamon.
80. *Cypria* (Kinkel), p. 29 fr. 17 = schol. Lyc. *Al.* 570; Pherecydes *FGrH* 3F140; Parth. *Erot.* 1; Diod. Sic. 5.62.1–2; schol. Lyc. *Al.* 580; Dion. Hal. *On Dinarchus* 11.17. In Tzetzes *Chil.* 6.976–82 Rhoeo is one of Jason's three putative mothers.
81. Schol. Lyc. *Al.* 570.
82. Schol. Lyc. *Al.* 580. Pausanias 1.38.4 indicates that there was a shrine of Zarax near that of Hippothoon at Eleusis. He writes that Zarex has learned music from Apollo. While this detail seems to connect this Zarex with the myth of Rhoeo, Pausanias believes that Zarex was a foreigner in Attica, a Spartan after whom the coastal town of Zarax had been named.
83. Schol. Lyc. *Al.* 570. Parthenius *Love Stories* 1, reports an entirely different tradition in which Lycus is tricked into intercourse with Hemithea by Staphylus. Years later, their son Basilos comes to Lycus to claim his inheritance, and he becomes king over Lycus's domain.
84. *Cypria* (Kinkel), p. 29 fr. 17 = schol. Lyc. *Al.* 570; Pherecydes *FGrH* 3F140; Verg. *Aen.* 3.79–83 (see also Servius *Aen.* 3.80); Ov. *Met.* 13.632–67; schol. Lyc. *Al.* 580.
85. Cf. Similar treatment in Verg. *Aen.* 3.79–83.
86. Suárez de la Torre 2013: 76.

87. Suárez de la Torre 2013.

88. Hdt. 4.154–55; Suda s.v. Battos.

89. For a historiographical analysis of this passage, see Osborne 2002: 504–8. See also the story of the twins Tennes and Hemitheia, who are put in a *larnax* by their father Cynus after their stepmother falsely accuses Tennes of having raped her. The chest lands on the island of Leukophrys, where Tennes soon becomes king and renames the island “Tenedos” after himself: Heraclides Ponticus fr. 7 (*FHG* II.213 Müller); Conon *FGrH* 26F28; Paus. 10.14.2; schol. Lyc. *Al.* 232; Apollod. *Ep.* 3.23–25; Diod. Sic. 5.83.4–5; Plut. *Quaest. Gr.* 28, 297d–f; schol. *Il.* 1.38b; Steph. Byz. s.v. Tenedos. See Glotz 1904: 23.

90. Alternatively, Catreus, the father of Aerope, is warned by an oracle that he would die by the hand of one of his children. Fearing their father, his son and one of his daughters leave Crete immediately, while Catreus gives his two other daughters, Aerope and Clymene, to Nauplios to be sold as slaves. See Soph. *Aj.* 1297 and schol.; Eur. *Or.* 16–17; *Cretans* (460–70 Nauck²); Apollod. 3.12–15; *Epit.* 2.10–11; Hyg. *Fab.* 86, 97.1, 246; Paus. 2.18.2; Ov. *Trist.* 2.391; schol. *Il.* 1.7; Serv. to Verg. *Aen.* 1.458. The similar story of Clymene, in which she marries Nauplius and gives birth to Palamedes, is attested only in Apollod. 2.23, 3.12–15; *Epit.* 6.8. Cf. the story of Astyages’ efforts to prevent the birth of Cyrus, first giving Mandane in marriage to a Persian and then ordering one of his herdsmen to expose her child: Hdt. 1.107–13.

91. For a discussion of the role of this narrative in the Cyreneans’ account of the foundation of their city, see Calame 2003: 94.

92. On the relationship between heroes and their mothers, see Dowden 1989: 201–2; Larson 1995: 2.

93. See Cursaru 2014.

94. See Seaford 1987; Buxton 1992.

95. *Il.* 14.321–22; schol. *Il.* 6.131, 12.292; Hes. fr. 140, 141 (Merkelbach-West); Bacchyl. fr. 10 (Snell-Maehler); Stesich. fr. 195 (Page); Simon. fr. 562 (Page); Aesch. *Carians* fr. 99 *TrGF*; Acousilaos *FGrH* F29; Eumelus *EGF* fr. 2; schol. Eur. *Phoen.* 670; Mosch. 2 (Gow); Hor. *Car.* 3.27; Ov. *Met.* 2.846–51; Apollod. 3.1–4; Paus. 9.5.8; Luc. *Dial. Mar.* 15; Clem. *Al. Strom.* 1.24.164.

96. *LIMC* s.v. Europa (Robertson).

97. Wedding imagery also at lines 123–24 (γάμιον μέλος “the wedding-song”) and 165 (γένετ’ αὐτίκα νύμφη “she immediately became a bride”).

98. Burkert 1983 [1972]: 196.

CHAPTER 4

1. See for instance Arist. *HA* 489a34 (the dolphin is viviparous); 489b2 (the dolphin is classified among whales); 516b11 (the dolphin has bones); 504b21 (the dolphin is a mammalian); Opp. *Hal.* 1.660; Plin. *HN* 9.21; Ael. *NA* 10.8.

2. Dolphins appear on a number of Mycenaean artifacts such as swords, jewelry, and funerary offerings (see Deonna 1922). However, in the absence of literary evidence (dolphins are not mentioned in the Mycenaean tablets), it is difficult to interpret what religious significance these objects might have had. A similar situation exists for the Minoan representations of dolphins that have been variously interpreted as cults of an early Apollo Delphinus, or else as examples of totemism. Morgan 1988: 34–63 analyzes the iconography of the dolphin in Minoan art; Marinatos 1993: 131–32 and 156–57 suggests that the dolphin in Minoan art is a representation of power and may be associated with priests and priestesses.

3. In the *Shield* 211–13, the dolphin is described as a voracious marine monster that scares fish away. In *Iliad* 21.22–26, Achilles is compared to a dolphin gorging on fish in the sea when he dispatches scores of Trojan warriors to Hades. In the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 401, the god under his dolphin shape is called πέλωρ μέγα τε δεινόν, “an enormous and terrible monster” that frightens the Cretan sailors. In these poems, the dolphin is called a κῆτος “marine monster” and is therefore in the same category as seals and whales (e.g., *Od.* 12.96–97). See also Archil. fr. 122 (West); Opp. *Hal.* 2.551. The dolphin is commonly said to be swift (Plin. *HN* 9.20; Ael. *NA* 12.12; Opp. *Hal.* 2.533; Isid. *Orig.* 12.6, 11); and some call it “the king of the sea”: Opp. *Hal.* 2.539; Ael. *NA* 15.17; *Aesopica*, fab. 251 (Halm). Pindar *Nemean* 6.64–66 compares Melesius the chariot driver to a swift dolphin.

4. Ar. *Ran.* 1317–19, with schol. See Dover 1997 ad loc. for the interpretation of the line as “omen” from dolphins’ leaps. See also Artem. 2.16, 110; Isid. *Orig.* 17.6, 11; Lucan, *BC* 5.552.

5. Artemidorus 1.16, 110; 2.16 writes that seeing a swimming dolphin in a dream indicates luck,

while seeing a beached dolphin indicates misfortune. On the dolphin as a symbol of luck in Greco-Roman culture, see Andreae 1986. In Longus 3.27.4, the Nymphs indicate to Daphnis in a dream that he will find near a beached dolphin a purse that will enable him to sue for Chloe's hand.

6. Pind. *Nem.* 6.64; *Pyth.* 2.51; Eur. *El.* 435; *Hel.* 1454–56; Ael. *NA* 11.12 and 12.6; Plut. *Soll. An.* 977f; Ant. Car. C60; Opp. *Hal.* 2.628; Plin. *HN* 9.33. The dolphin likes the music of the pipes: Pind. fr. 125, 69–71 (Bowie); Ar. *Ran.* 1345; Eratosth. *Catast.* 1.31, 21; *Anth. Pal.* 7.214, 3; Plut. *Conv.* 162f; *Soll. An.* 984b; Ael. *NA* 12.45; Solin. 12.6. See also Eur. *Hel.* 1454–56: καλλιχόρων δελφίνων.

7. The dolphin cooperates with fellow dolphins when in danger (Arist. *HA* 631a9; Plin. *HN* 9.27–33). The dolphin, like men, loves and protects its offspring (Ael. *NA* 1.18, 10.8; Opp. *Hal.* 1.647, 5.526).

8. Dolphins are easily domesticated: Arist. *HA* 631a8; Plin. *HN* 9.28 (quoting Theophrastus); Paus. 3.25.7. Dolphins help fishermen: Plin. *HN* 9.29; Ael. *NA* 2.8; Opp. *Hal.* 5.416.

9. Plut. *Soll. An.* 984c–d.

10. Ath. 282e; Opp. *Hal.* 5.416; Plut. *Conv.* 163a; Ael. *NA* 12.6. Only the barbarous Thracians consume dolphin meat and make oil with its fat. Opp. *Hal.* 5.519. Xen. *An.* 5.4.28 reports that the Mossynoecians, a tribe living on the southern shore of the Euxine, eat dolphin meat and use its fat for oil but does not comment on this treatment of dolphins. Medicinal uses of dolphin fat and flesh include the following: Those suffering from edema drink dolphin oil with wine: Plin. *HN* 32.117. Plin. *HN* 32.129 recommends fumigations of dolphin fat for women suffering from suffocations due to the “wandering womb.” This remedy is no doubt prescribed because of the ancient folk etymology that connects δελφίς “dolphin” with δελφύς “the womb.” Those affected by malaria are helped by eating dolphin liver: Plin. *HN* 32.113. Dolphin ashes cure leprosy and rashes: Plin. *HN* 32.83. Burnt dolphin teeth cure toothaches: Plin. *HN* 32.137. Archaeologists have found that pickled dolphin flesh was consumed in Athens during the Classical period and later: Pritchett and Pippin 1956: 202–3 n. 192 (with literary sources); Papadopoulos and Paspalas 1999: 177 n. 82; Papadopoulos and Ruscillo 2002: 200 n. 48.

11. Arist. *HA* 631a; Ael. *NA* 12.6; Plin. *HN* 9.33. Plut. *Soll. An.* 985b: dolphins attend the cremation of one of their fellows. See also *Anth. Pal.* 7.214 (Archias), 215 (Anyte), 216 (Antipater). Cf. *Il.* 23.70–76. See Vermeule 1979: 2–8; Garland 1985: 101–3.

12. These beliefs may stem from observed dolphin behavior: e.g., *New Standard*, July 26, 1996 (Associated Press, Cairo, Egypt), “Dolphins save swimmer from shark”; *CNN*, March 12, 2008 (Associated Press, Wellington, New Zealand), “Dolphin rescues stranded whales.”

13. Parody in *Aesop.* 75 (Hausrath and Hunger): a shipwrecked monkey is caught lying by a dolphin and drowned. See also the story of Coeranus, Ath. 13.606d–e; Ael. *NA* 8.3; Plut. *Soll. An.* 985a–c, who saves a dolphin from fishing nets and as a reward, is rescued from a shipwreck by dolphins. Later, when he dies, a pod of dolphins follows his funerary procession along the harbor.

14. Stob. 1.49.44.321 (Hense-Wachsmuth).

15. Main sources: Hdt. 1.24–25; Plut. *Conv.* 161b–f; Aulus Gellius 16.19, 12–13, 16; Tzetz. *Chil.* 1.17.403. Full list of sources in Klement 1898; Bowra 1963; Giangrande 1974; Bruschich 1976; Burkert 1983 [1972]: 196–204; Vignolo-Munson 1986; Hooker 1989; Perutelli 2003. Arion *floruit*: 617 BC (Eus. *Chron. Ol.* 40); 628/5: Suda, s.v. Arion; 664/1: Solin. 7.6 (Mommesen). On the dates of Arion's life span, see Schamp 1976: 104. The story of Arion is mentioned in a large number of ancient Greek and Roman texts, e.g., Cic. *Tusc.* 2.67; Ov. *Fasti* 2.79–118; Plin. *HN* 9.8; Fronto 237; Ap. *Met.* 6.29; *Anth. Pal.* 9.88 (Phil. *Thess.*); Dio Chrys. *Cor.* 37; Opp. *Hal.* 5.448–52. A heavily damaged epigram of Thera (Kaibel *Ep. ex lap. conl.* 1086) was interpreted as the epitaph of Arion's brother: Κυκλείδης Κ]υκλήος ἄδε[λφ]ε[ῖ]ωι Ἀρίω]νι, τὸν δελφίς [σώ]σε, μνημόσυνον τέλεσεν. Kaibel notes that no one has been able to convincingly prove the relationship between this distich and the singer Arion.

16. Arion is credited with the invention of dithyrambs: Hdt. 1.23; choral poetry: Pind. *Ol.* 13.18–19 with schol.; Hellanic. *FGrH* 4F86 = schol. Ar. Av. 1403; Arist. fr. 677 (Rose); schol. Pl. *Resp.* 394c = Procl. *Chrest.* 320a31; Dikaiarchus fr. 75 W; Tzetz. schol. *Lyc.* 39. The Suda, s.v. Arion, credits him with inventing the tragic style and says that Arion was the first to establish a chorus, to sing a dithyramb, to provide a name for what the chorus sang, and to have satyrs speaking in verse. See Zimmermann 2000: 16.

17. In Hyg. *Fab.* 194 and *Poet. astr.* 17.3, Arion is attacked by his own slaves instead of the crew. Hyginus indicates that they were severely punished by Peranthus (*sic*), the king of Corinth. In *Fab.* 194, the slaves are crucified near the dolphin's memorial on the beach where Arion landed at Cape Taenarum. This version of the story may be connected to the fact that Taenarum was a sanctuary for slaves.

18. Also in schol. ad Clem. Al. *Prot.* 1.3.3.11.

19. Hdt. 1.24; *Anth. Pal.* 16.276 (Bianor); Apollod. 3.25.7; Serv. to Verg. *Ecl.* 8.55; Ael. *NA* 12.45; Paus. 3.25.7; Solin. 7.
20. Versnel 1980.
21. Bianor, *Anth. Pal.* 9.308 indicates that Arion landed at the Isthmus. This may originate from a contamination with the myth of Melicertes.
22. Pind. *Pyth.* 4.43 with schol.; Ar. *Ran.* 187; schol. Ar. *Ach.* 509; Men. fr. 842 (Kock); Mela 2.51; Hor. *Carm.* 1.34.10 with schol.; Sen. *Tranq.* 402; Lucan *BC* 9.36; Stat. *Theb.* 1.96, 2.48; Apul. *Met.* 6.18.20; *Orph. Arg.* 1369; Serv. ad Verg. *G.* 4.466; Tzetz. ad Lyc. *Al.* 90; Suda s.v. Tainaron; Solin. 7.8.
23. Eur. *Her.* 23; Paus. 3.25.5; Palaeph. *Incr.* 39; Tzetz. *Chil.* 2.36.398.
24. Ap. Rhod. *Arg.* 1.102 with schol.; Hyg. *Fab.* 79; *Orph. Arg.* 41; Verg. *G.* 4.467; Ov. *Met.* 10.13; Sen. *HF* 587; *HO* 1061.
25. Mela 2.45; Strab. 8.363; Paus. 3.25.4. See Ogden 2001.
26. Plut. *Conv.* 161b–162b.
27. Arnott 1977; Thévenaz 2004.
28. Aesch. *PV* 794–97.
29. Pl. *Phdr.* 84e–85a.
30. Plut. *Conv.* 161e.
31. Gray 2001: 17.
32. See also Flory 1978: 411.
33. Plut. *Conv.* 162a: παντάπασιν αἰσθῆσθαι θεοῦ κυβερνήσει γεγονέναι τὴν κομιδὴν “he fully realized that his rescue was effected by divine guidance”; 162b: ὄντως οὖν εὐοικένας θεῖα τύχη τὸ πρᾶγμα “and really the event seemed divinely directed.”
34. Plut. *Conv.* 161f.
35. See also Philostr. *Imag.* 1.19 (with a further parallel with the story of Melicertes).
36. Cf. Lyons 2007. Lyons argues that Herodotus’s rendition of the story of Arion contains a punning reference to the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus* in the use of Arion’s ethnic μεθυμναῖος “from Methymna” with Dionysus’s epithet μεθυμναῖος “the drunken one.” However, the epithet μεθυμναῖος is relatively rare and does not appear in the *Hymn* itself: see Plut. *Quaest. Conv.* 648e; Ath. 7.64, 39; Call. *Suppl. Hell.* 276, 9 (Lloyd-Jones); Eust. ad *Od.* 1.134.13; schol. ad Hes. *Op.* 20; Hesych. s.v. *Methymnaïos*.
37. Gray 2001: 14. She points out that the hymn of the pseudo-Arion credits Poseidon with the rescue: Ael. *NA* 12.45. See also Bowra 1963: 122–24.
38. On the sanctuary at Taenarum, see Cummer 1978; Günther 1988; Mylonopoulos 2003.
39. On the dedication, see Steures 1999.
40. Klement 1898: 6. See also Rabinovitch 1947: 26 n. 40.
41. Graf 1979: 22.
42. E.g., *IG VII* 4240 (third century BC); *Anth. Pal.* 2.12, 7.52, 9.24, 9. 64. See also West 1984: 33–36 and Argoud 1996. On *IG VII* 4240, see Jamot 1890: 546–51; Peek 1977: 173–75; Hurst 1996.
43. These traditions are collected in the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod (Certamen)*. See Beaulieu 2004. Most scholars agree that the *Certamen* dates from the reign of Antoninus: see Vogt 1959: 196; West 1967: 433; Chamoux 1982: 14–15. However, it is also generally accepted that the *Certamen* echoes, at least in part, Alcidas’s *Mouseion*, which dates back to the fourth century BC. Alcidas is directly cited in the *Certamen*, line 240 (Allen). Furthermore, the legend of this poetic contest was known in the fifth century. Thuc. 3.96 mentions the death of Hesiod in the temple of Nemean Zeus for wrongly interpreting an oracle. Ar. *Peace* 1280 and 1286–87 strongly recall the *Certamen* 205–12 (Allen). Eratosthenes (ca. 275–194 BC) reportedly wrote an epic known as *Anterinyos* or *Hesiod*, which recounted the death of the poet and the punishment of his murderers. See Richardson 1981: 1.
44. Paus. 9.38.3–4; *Certamen* 224–36 (Allen); Plut. *Soll. An.* 969e, 984d; *Conv.* 162d–e; Poll. 5.42; *Suda* s.v. Hesiod 9–11; Thuc. 3.96. 1; Tzetz. *Vita Hes.* 34–40 (Merkelbach-West).
45. See Koch-Piettre 2005.
46. Festival of Ariadne: *Certamen* 224–36; festival of Poseidon: Plut. *Conv.* 162d–e. Buried in Naupactus: Paus. 9.38.3–4; in Locrian Oinoe: *Certamen* 224–36; in Oineon near Naupactus: Thuc. 3.2.3.
47. Buried in a secret location near the Nemeion: Plut. *Conv.* 162e. Some scholars suggest that Hesiod may first have been buried in Ascræ, but there is no evidence for such a burial in our sources. See Scodel 1980: 303 n. 7. Likewise, various scholars, such as Friedel 1878–79: 235–78 and Nagy 1982: 50–51, have assumed that there was a cult of Hesiod in Ascræ.
48. Poll. 5.42 and Plut. *Soll. An.* 969e, 984d.

49. Cf. Plut. *Soll. An.* 969c–970b.

50. The date of the transfer of Hesiod's relics to Orchomenus is unclear, and our sources give no indication as to the lapse of time between the two burials. Buck 1979: 98 believes that it took place in the seventh century, when the people of Ascrea fled to Orchomenus because of a Thespian invasion. Wallace 1985: 167 believes that the transfer happened in the mid-fifth century and was intended to support Orchomenus's claim to the leadership of the Boeotian League.

51. Ps.-Arist. *Const. Orch.* fr. 565 (Rose) = Tzetz. *Vit. Hes.* 42–44 (Merkelbach-West); *Certamen* 247–53 (Allen); *Anth. Pal.* 7.54.

52. About the crow, see Schiller 1934: 812–14.

53. Tzetzes only indicates that Hesiod was buried in the middle of the marketplace. The *tholos* was apparently the focus of the founder cult of Minyas, and games in his honor took place there: Paus. 9.38.3; *POxy* 26.2451A fr. 1 col. II, 27. Unfortunately, the archaeological excavation of the *tholos* proved disappointing, and only a few rather low-quality objects were recovered. See Schliemann 1881: 122–63; Pelon 1976: 237; Antonaccio 1995: 127–30. However, Coldstream 1976: 11 sees “massive evidence for cult” in the material found in the *tholos*.

54. See Schachter 1986: 143–44.

55. Paus. 9.38.4. Tzetz. *Vit. Hes.* 45–48 (Merkelbach-West) = Ps.-Arist. *Const. Orch.* fr. 565 (Rose); *Certamen* 250–53 (Allen); *Anth. Pal.* 7.54 (attributes the epigram to Mnasalces, an elegiac poet from the third century BC).

56. Tzetz. *Vit. Hes.* 49–51 (Merkelbach-West); Ps.-Arist. *Const. Orch.* fr. 565 (Rose) (without authorial attribution); Suda s.v. τὸ Ἡσιόδειον γῆρας.

57. Scodel 1980: 302. We note the word χαῖρε “farewell,” which was used in the Archaic period to address the heroic dead. See Sourvinou-Inwood 1996: 187–95.

58. McKay 1959: 1–5.

59. Scodel 1980.

60. Suda τ 732.

61. Hes. fr. 276 (Merkelbach-West); Scodel 1980: 318.

62. Cf. the ring of Polycrates (Hdt. 3.41–42), Arion's leap, and Theseus's leap in Bacchylides *Ode* 17.

63. In the latter case, the etiological legend concerning Hesiod's burial in the *tholos* at Orchomenus would be a local tradition.

64. E.g., *Hymn. Hom. Merc.* 550–63 (Allen); poetry is compared to honey in *Theog.* 84; Pind. *Pyth.* 10.53; Simon. fr. 88 (Page); Plat. *Ion* 534a–b.

65. E.g., Soph. *El.* 894 (milk libations on Agamemnon's tomb); Plut. *De Genio* 578E (milk libations on a tomb); Aesch. *Persae* 613 (honey libations for the dead and for Darius's *daimôn*); Paus. 2.11.4 (μελίκρατον poured for the Erinyes); *Il.* 23.170–221 (Achilles places jars of honey and oil on Patroclus's tomb and then pours wine libations while calling to Patroclus's soul). See Graf 1980: 209–21 and Verbanck-Piérard 1998: 119–20.

66. Henrichs 1983: 87–100 specifies that there is usually no way to tell exactly why some deities and heroes receive *nephalia* as opposed to wine libations. According to him, since the cult of heroes was an extension of the cult of the dead, it did not absolutely require the exclusion of wine because unmixed wine was offered to some of the dead and some chthonic deities.

67. An inscription of Thespiæ (*IG* VII 1785, ca. 230 BC) indicates that an association of *synthytai* offered sacrifices to the Muses on behalf of Hesiod. See Roesch 1982: 162–65; Allen 1924: 48.

68. The theory according to which the name Melicertes is related to that of the Phoenician god Melkart has now been abandoned. See Bonnet 1986: 59.

69. For an in-depth discussion of Ino, see Chapter 5.

70. Apollod. 3.4.3; Pind. fr. *Isthm.* 5–6; Arg. Pind. *Isth.* 4; Call. fr. 91 (Pfeiffer); Eur. *Med.* 1284 with schol.; Hellenic. *FGrH* 4F165; Musaios *FGrH* 455F1; Arist. fr. 637 (Rose); Hyg. *Fab.* 2.4; Ov. *Fasti* 6.485; *Met.* 4.506–42; Paus. 1.44.8–11, 2.1.3–8; Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 16; *Quaest. Conv.* 677b; Paus. 2.1.7; Ael. Aristid. *Or.* 3.25.13, 27.29, 28.13; Luc. *D. Mar.* 8; schol. ad *Od.* 5.334; schol. Ap. Rhod. 3.1240; Servius ad Verg. *Aen.* 5.241; Tzetz. ad Lyc. *Al.* 21, 107, 229.

71. Ov. *Met.* 5.416–542; Hyg. *Fab.* 2; Serv. to Verg. *Aen.* 5.241; *Etym. Magn.* s.v. *Athamantion*.

72. Pind. *Isthm.* Arg. A and D.

73. Paus. 2.2.1; *IG* IV 1, 203. See Koester 1990: 361. Paus. 2.1.7 also describes a frieze in the Poseidonion representing Poseidon, Amphitrite, and Melicertes.

74. Broneer 1959: 327.

75. Gebhard and Dickie 1999; Burkert 1972 [1962]: 219–21; Musaios *FGrH* 455F1 (perhaps writing

in the second century BC) is the author of a treatise on the Isthmian games in which he distinguished two *agones*, one in honor of Poseidon and one in honor of Melicertes.

76. Will 1955; Hawthorne 1958; Koester 1990; Piérart 1998; Seelinger 1998. Rupp 1979: 66–67 claims that foundations located to the southeast of the temple of Poseidon were part of the *temenos* of Palaemon and dated between the construction of the earlier stadium ca. 470–460 BC and the reconstruction of the sanctuary following a destructive fire ca. 400–390 BC, but see Gebhard and Dickie 1999.

77. Piérart 1998: 88.

78. See Gebhard and Dickie 1999; Bonnechere 2007: 23.

79. Piérart 1998: 85 signals that the old inhabitants of Corinth and other people were authorized to come back to live in the area and exploit the land after the destruction of the city. This explains the traces of habitation and religious cult during the abandonment period. However, Piérart points out that no public cult was celebrated in Corinth during this period, as the city was not officially in existence.

80. Marchetti and Kolokotsas 1995: 204 considers that the Roman cult was a continuation of a cult that started in the Classical period. He is refuted by Piérart 1998: 102–4.

81. Piérart 1998.

82. Imhoof-Blumer and Gardner 1964 [1885–87], pl. B (Corinth 1), nos. XI, XII, XIII (silver coins of Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus, and Caracalla).

83. Paus. 2.2.1.

84. Will 1955: 172 n. 1.

85. The cult of other child heroes such as Pelops, Opheltes, and the children of Medea had a similar chthonian character. See Pache 2004, esp. 135–80.

86. Ael. Aristid. *Or.* 3.25, 27.29, 28.13; Burkert 1983 [1972]: 198.

87. See Bollack 1958. Cf. Meurant 1998: the oracle and oath-taking cult of the Sicilian Palikes involved an ordeal by water.

88. Piérart 1998: 101.

89. Pind. *Nem.* 6.40; Philostr. *Imag.* 2.16; Liban. *Or.* 14.5.67. Some coins of Corinth show a bull being led to the Palaemonion: Imhoof-Blumer and Gardner 1964 [1885–87]: pl. B (Corinth 1), nos. XI and XIII. See Burkert 1983 [1972]: 197. Ekroth 2002: 124–25, has shown that the sacrifices for Palaemon constitute the only osteologically demonstrated case of a holocaust for a Greek hero. According to her, this ritual was archaizing rather than truly archaic, chosen in the Roman period to appear more ancient than it really was.

90. Philostr. *Imag.* 2.16. *IG IV* 1, 203 mentions an *enagisterion* in the Palaimonion. See Ekroth 2002: 74.

91. Cf. purported child sacrifices to Melicertes-Palaemon *brephektontos* “baby-killer” on Tenedos: Lyc. *Al.* 229 with schol. and Call. fr. 91 Pfeiffer. See Bonnechere 1994: 241 n. 55. Bonnet 1986: 60 suggests that Palaemon receives the epithet *brephektontos* because he was himself sacrificed to Hera’s anger.

92. See Seelinger 1998: 273 n. 10.

93. Philostr. *Her.* 740.17 (Olearius). See Bonnet 1986: 57.

94. See Seelinger 1998.

95. Will 1955: 179 n. 3; Amandry 1988: 63–64, 176–80, pl. XLVIII, D i–ii.

96. Dolley 1893: 109; Jeanmaire 1951: 16–17.

97. Pine trees in the sanctuary at Isthmia: Strab. 8.6.22; Paus. 2.1.7. A pine tree on the shore of the Isthmus near the altar of Melicertes: Paus. 2.1.3.

98. Pine tree on coinage above Melicertes and dolphin: Imhoof-Blumer and Gardner 1964 [1885–87]: pl. B (Corinth 1), nos. I and II (silver coins of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus); see Seelinger 1998: 279. Plut. *Quaest. Conv.* 5.3.1 explains that the pine tree is associated with both Poseidon and Dionysus because it is used in shipbuilding as well as in winemaking.

99. Philostr. *Imag.* 2.16.

100. Will 1955: 217.

101. According to Philostratus *Her.* 740.17 (Olearius), the rites performed for Melicertes are the same as those performed for the children of Medea.

102. Cf. the martyrologies of Lucianus (*PG* 114: 394–415), Arrianus (*PG* 117: 206d), and Callistratus (*AASS* 7.191d), who were cast into the sea and whose bodies miraculously returned to shore. See Hošek 1987: 112–13 and Diez 1955.

103. Eur. *Medea* 1282–89. Cf. Philostratus’s reference to the twin Corinthian cults of Melicertes

and the children of Medea.

104. Myrsil. *FGrH* 477F14 = Plut. *Soll. An.* 984e; Anticlid. *FGrH* 140F4 = Ath. 11.15, 466c–d. Fuller account in Plut. *Conv.* 163a–d.

105. On the story as an episode of coming-of-age, see Bonnechere 1994: 128–30, 164–80.

106. Bonnechere 1994: 174.

107. Paus. 10.10.8.

108. Paus. 10.10.8–10; Diod. Sic. 8.20–21; Strab. 6.3.2–6: the Pythia validates Phalanthus's leadership and indicates Tarentum as a destination for the expedition. See also: Iust. 3.4; Diod. Sic. 15.66.3; Pol. 12.6b; Dion. Hal. *Ant.* 19.1; Polyaeus 2.14.2; Aristot. fr. 611.57 (Rose); Probus ad Verg. *G.* 2.197; 4.125; Serv. ad Verg. *Aen.* 3.551; 6.773; Sil. Il. 11.16; Ps.-Acro. ad Hor. *Carm.* 2.6.12; Porph. ad Hor. *Carm.* 2.6.11–12.

109. Paus. 10.13.10.

110. Servius ad Verg. *Aen.* 3.551; ad *G.* 4.125; Hesych. s.v. Taras. On the Partheniae, see Antiochus *FGrH* 55F13; Ephorus *FGrH* 70F216; Aristot. *Pol.* 5.7, 1306b29–31; Diod. Sic. 8.21; and Theopomp. *FGrH* 115F171.

111. Arist. fr. 590 (Rose). Coins: *LIMC* s.v. Phalanthus, 2–28.

112. Phalanthus: Studniczka 1890: 175. Dumont 1975: 71 connects Apollo with Phalanthus and Taras with Poseidon, and says that the latter overcame the former in the fifth century. Malkin 1987: 219–20 deems the question unanswerable for lack of evidence.

113. Paus. 10.13.10.

114. *Selinon* means “celery” in Greek. Lacroix 1954: 14–23.

115. Lacroix 1954: 20.

116. See Graf 1979: 5.

117. See also Petrisor (Cursaru) 2009: 333–436.

118. See Kingsley 1995: 15–35, 123–25.

119. Servius ad Verg. *Aen.* 3.332; Testament of Epicteta: *IG* XII 3, 330. *Etym. Magn.* s.v. Eikadios.

120. Cf. the story of Soteles and Dionysius in Plut. *Soll. An.* 984a–b; *De Is. et Os.*, 361f; Tac. *Hist.* 4.83–84. These envoys of Ptolemy Soter are blown off course while trying to reach Sinope. A dolphin appears (προφάνεντα) by the prow—yet another instance of divine epiphany—and leads them to Delphi, where they receive an oracle about their errand.

121. Bourboulis 1949: 61.

122. Malkin 1987: 17–28.

123. See Bourboulis 1949: 13–17 and Graf 1979. Inscriptions attest to the existence of temples of Apollo Delphinus, festivals, names of months, and theophoric names in Crete, Thera, Aigina, Sparta, Attica, Chalcis, Delphi, Miletos, Erythrae, Chios, Heracleia on Latmos, Massalia, and Olbia. On these cults, see Lifshitz 1966.

124. Various festivals for Delphinus were held at the opening of the sailing season, especially in Athens on 6 Mounichion: see Bourboulis 1949: 62–69 for a full discussion of the question. The *aition* of this festival is Theseus's offering to Delphinus before leaving for Crete (Plut. *Thes.* 18). However, Graf 1979: 6–7 points out some problems with this view, mainly questions related to the calendars of the many cities that worshipped Delphinus.

125. Murder cases that were considered justified were tried in the Delphinion: Andoc. 1.78; Dem. *Aristoc.* 74 with schol.; *Contra Boeot.* 11; Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 57.3; Is. *Euphil.* 9; Ael. *VH* 5.15; Phot. 2.535.22 (Bekker); Poll. 8.119 (Bethe); Harpocr. s.v. Delphinion; Suda s.v. Epi Delphiniō and s.v. Ephetai; *Anecd. Graecae* I 255, 19, 311 (Bekker). See Graf 2009: 103–29: trials concerning citizenship were held in the Delphinion.

126. See Graf 1979. Complete catalogue of sources in Bourboulis 1949: 9–18.

127. Plut. *Thes.* 14.1.

128. Paus. 1.28.10; Poll. 8.119–20 (Bethe).

129. Plut. *Thes.* 12.6.

130. Plut. *Thes.* 18.1; Paus. 1.19.1.

131. Schol. Pind. *Ol.* 13.155; schol. *Pyth.* 8.88.

132. Dittenberger, *Syll.* I, 57 (Miletos, 450 BC).

133. Other accounts of this myth, which all closely follow the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*: *Etym. Magn.* s.v. Delphinus; schol. ad Arat. *Phaen.* 315; Plut. *Soll. An.* 984a; Tzetz. ad Lyc. 208.

134. Vilatte 1988: 312. See also Kyriazopoulos 1993: 396.

135. *Hymn. Hom. Ap.* 449.

136. Arist. *HA* 631a; Plin. *HN* 9.27; Plut. *Soll. An.* 985a–b; Ael. *NA* 6.15; Poll. 9.84; Antig. Car. *Mir.*

55.(60); Ath. 13.85; Tzetz. *Chil.* 4. 10–20; Solin. 12.10. Between 280 and 190 BC, Iasos minted coins representing Hermias: silver drachms and smaller bronze coins with a laureate head of Apollo and (reverse), a youth swimming with a dolphin (BMC 1–3, 6–11). Another type has the same youth with dolphin and (reverse) a lyre with a laurel wreath. See Lacroix 1958; Zeuner 1963: 101.

137. Plin. *HN* 9.25; Ael. *NA* 6.15; Gellius 6.8; Tzetz. *Chil.* 4.23; Solin. 12.7.

138. Ael. *NA* 6.15; Tzetz. *Chil.* 4.21.

139. Plin. *HN* 9.26; Pliny the Younger 9.33 (Keil); Solin. 12.9.

140. Opp. *Hal.* 5.453–57; Tzetz. *Chil.* 4.9.

141. Ael. *NA* 2.6.

142. Plin. *HN* 9.28.

143. Philo Jud. *Alex. PG* II, VII, p. 132, 67.

144. Ael. *NA* 2.6; Opp. *Hal.* 5.458–518; Paus. 3.25.7; Tzetz. *Chil.* 4.1–8.

145. Somville 1984: 22; Isler 1985.

146. Higham 1960; Jacques 1965; Montgomery 1966; Miller 1966.

147. Cf. A late fifth-century Boeotian lekythos in the Berlin Staatliches Museum. On it, two winged boys ride a dolphin and one of them plays the lyre. The boys can be identified either as souls departing for the afterlife (see Vermeule 1979: 1–41) or as psychopompic Erotes. For the psychopompic functions of Eros, see Athenian red-figure pelike, second half of fifth century BC, London, British Museum, BME395, CVA 1773 (Eros with a youth at a stele); Athenian red-figure white-ground lekythos, mid-fifth century BC, Marseille, Musée Borély, XXXX14890, CVA 14890 (tomb, Eros, woman). For the iconographical motif of Eros as dolphin rider, see Reho-Bumbalova 1981. She stresses both the erotic and the funerary significance of Eros as dolphin rider. For the psychopompic functions of Eros at Rome, see Cumont 1942: 337–50; L'Orange 1962. The apse of the underground basilica at Porta Maggiore (first century AD) shows Psyche entering into an expanse of water where at least twelve dolphins and two Tritons swim. Psyche is gently pushed along by a flying Eros in a representation of the voyage to the afterlife. See Curtis 1920; Hubaux 1923; Strong and Joliffe 1924; Détienné 1958; Kerenyi 1965; Pailler 1976; Cruciani 2000.

148. Attic hydria, fifth century BC, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco, Vatican 16568 (*LIMC* s.v. Apollon 382).

149. Flying, especially on swan-like wings, is indicative of a psychological journey. On flying, see Petrisor (Cursaru) 2009: 333–74 and Cursaru 2012. For the significance of swans and large waterbirds as intermediaries between mortals, immortals, and the dead, see Bonnechere 2003: 299–302. For the relationship between Apollo's bow and dolphins, see Monbrun 2007: 216–34.

150. Petrisor (Cursaru) 2009: 333–74.

151. *Hom. Hymn. Ap.* 400: ἐν πόντῳ δ' ἐπόρουσε δέμας δελφίνι ἐοικώς “he sprang up in the sea under the appearance of a dolphin.”

152. For instance *LIMC* s.v. Eos 2, 5, and 8. Hermes is occasionally present: e.g., Boeotian red-figure krater, Athens, National Archaeological Museum, 1383. See Lacroix 1974: 92–106.

153. Cf. on many representations of the abduction of Europa (*LIMC* s.v. Europa 1.24. 1.57. 1.78, 1.100, 1.104 etc), a dolphin swims underneath the bull, which is led by Hermes. The marine context, Hermes, and the dolphin stress both the crossing of the sea and the exchange between mortals and immortals in the myth: see Petrisor (Cursaru) 2009: 339, Lacroix 1974: 58. The remains of a fragmentary Attic plate (550–500 BC, Athens, National Museum, Acropolis Coll., 1.2427, Beazley 8557, Callipolitis-Feytmans 1974: plate 36.12) show Hermes' (or Perseus's) winged sandal engaged in a rapid movement—most likely running or flying—and underneath, the head and snout of a dolphin. Perhaps the dolphin signals the god's (or the hero's) voyage between worlds?

154. Cf. Somville 1984: 7: “Les dauphins ne symbolisent pas la mer, ce n'est qu'un accident, mais bien la présence divine.” Steinhart 1993: 211: “Die Delphine des Berliner Malers wie des Athenamalers sind in ihrer Betontheit eher als Begleiter Apollons denn als einfache Meerestiere zu verstehen.”

CHAPTER 5

1. Versnel 1980: 156.

2. Gallini 1963: esp. 88–89.

3. Gallini 1963: 62.

4. It is important to note that the words καταποντίζω “to throw into the sea,” καταποντιστής “murderer, pirate who throws into the sea,” and καταποντισμός “action of throwing into the sea, drowning” are rarely used to describe voluntary precipitations into the sea. Rather, these words are

used to describe the rejection or sinking of an object or person into the sea, e.g., the casting out of Danae (Agatharchides *De Mari Erythraeo* 7.90 Müller: καταποντισθεῖσαν ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς Ἀκρίσιου “she who was thrown into the sea by her father Acrisios”) and Auge (Alcidamas fr. 2.79 Avezzù: τὴν παῖδα καταποντίσαι “to throw the girl into the sea”), a shipwreck (*Aesopica* 69.2.5 Hausrath & Hunger: νηὸς καταποντίζεσθαι ἤδη μελλούσης “as the ship was about to sink”), an act of piracy (Isocrates *Panath.* 226.8: οὐδὲν μᾶλλον ἢ τοὺς καταποντιστάς καὶ ληστὰς καὶ τοὺς περὶ τὰς ἄλλας ἀδικίας ὄντας “any more than pirates or brigands or men who carry out other types of injustice”). See Koch-Piettre 2005: 79–80.

5. Chantraine 1999 [1974]: 975. See Harrell 1991.

6. Chantraine 1999 [1974]: 905–6.

7. Chantraine 1999 [1974]: 559. The *kolymbis* is identified as the grebe, see Thompson 1895: 90–91.

8. Cf. Polyb. 28.6.6, where a risky political move is compared to an acrobatic leap: τοὺς δ’ ὑπερκυβιστώντας καὶ διὰ τῶν κοινῶν πραγμάτων ἰδίαν χάριν ἀποτιθεμένουσ παρὰ Ῥωμαίοις καὶ τοῦτο πράττοντας παρὰ τοὺς νόμους καὶ παρὰ τὸ κοινῇ συμφέρον, τούτους ἔφασαν δεῖν κωλύειν καὶ πρὸς τοὺτους ἀντοφθαλμεῖν εὐγενῶς “they said that those who were ready to make the plunge, trying to ingratiate themselves personally with the Romans by their public action, in defiance of law and contrary to the public interest, should be prevented and boldly confronted” (tr. Paton). See Deonna 1953: 93.

9. On the significance of the dolphin in the story of Arion, see Chapter 4.

10. Cf. the story of Hero and Leander: Musaeus *Hero and Leander*; Ov. *Her.* 18, 19; Tr. 3.10.41; *Ars Am.* 2.249; Verg. *G.* 3.358; Str. 131.22; Somville 2000.

11. Cf. *Od.* 10.50–52: when his comrades loose the winds from the skin in which they were imprisoned, Odysseus wonders if he should throw himself into the sea to die (πεσὼν ἐκ νηὸς ἀποφθίμην ἐνὶ πόντῳ).

12. Nagy 1990: 223–24.

13. Strab. 10.2.8–9; Ael. *NA* 11.8; L. Ampel. *Mir.* 8.4; Cic. *ad Att.* 16.6.1; Phot. s.v. *Leukatês*; Ov. *Her.* 15.179–80, 215–16.

14. E.g., Aesch. *PV* 589 (οἰστροδινῆτου κόρης “the girl frenzied by the gadfly”); Ov. *Met.* 1.725–27. On a krater in Munich, Antikensammlung 3296 (J810), ca. 330 BC, the personification of Oistros accompanies Medea on her chariot as she leaves Corinth after killing her children. See Elice 2004: 26. In the *Odyssey* 22.300 the suitors rush through the palace “as if goaded by a gadfly.”

15. E.g., Eur. *Bacch.* 1229: εἶδον Αὐτονόην Ἰνώ θ’ ἅμα ἔτ’ ἀμφὶ δρυμοὺς οἰστροπληγὰς ἀθλίας “I saw Autonoe and Ino still raving in the bushes, wretched.”

16. Cf. Plut. *Lat. Viv.* 1130c–e, describes those who choose to lead an obscure life as casting themselves (ἐμβάλλων) into oblivion.

17. Immersion into salt or fresh water was often said to cure madness. Saltwater: Origen *in Matth.* 13.6; Ar. *Vesp.* 118 with scholia; Iamb. *Myst.* III 10; Ov. *Met.* 15.325. See Gallini 1963: 74–75. In Sophocles’ *Ajax* 654–56, the hero bathes near the sea to purify himself from his imaginary crimes as well as to get rid of his madness. See Ginouvès 1962: 372. Madness cured in freshwater: Ov. *Met.* 15.317–35 (a list of springs and lakes that cure or provoke madness); Paus. 8.19.2–3 (a drink from the spring Alyssos “Curer of Madness” in Arcadia could cure a man rendered mad or wounded by an enraged dog); schol. *Od.* 3.489; Ps.-Plut. *De Fluv.* 19.2 (a drink from the river Alpheios, or a plant growing in it, was said to cure rage, the “sacred disease,” as well as other mental afflictions). The Proetids are cured from their madness by immersion into a spring: see Dowden 1989: 75–86. Various historical figures, such as queen Artemisia, took the dive from the Leucadian cliff to cure love in imitation of Sappho and were killed or injured. See Nagy 1990: 229. On literary motifs that connect the sea with eroticism, see Murgatroyd 1995.

18. In Phot. 190 p. 153a (Bekker).

19. Pl. *Phdr.* 276b; Theophr. *Caus. Pl.* 1.12.2; Men. *Sam.* 45; schol. Theocr. *Id.* 15.112–13, 133; Zenob. *Ath.* 2.90 p. 367 Miller = Zenonius 1.49; Eusth. p. 1701.45–50. See Burkert 1979: 99–122. According to Alciph. *Epist.* 4.14.8, coral was used instead of the ephemeral plants in the “gardens of Adonis.”

20. Apollod. 3.183–85 (perhaps quoting Panyassis). For figurative sources and bibliography, see Burkert 1979: 109.

21. Cf. the death of Theseus when he is thrown down the Skironian Rocks (White Rocks): Paus. 1.17.6; schol. Ar. *Plut.* 627. Nagy notes that Theseus casts the bandit Skiron off the Molurian rock (Paus. 1.33.8), which is precisely the rock from which Ino throws herself into the sea before becoming a goddess. A shrine of Zeus Aphesios “the releaser” was found at the summit of the Molurian rock. See Nagy 1990: 230–31, esp. nn. 27 and 28.

22. See Deonna 1953: 91.

23. See a similar metaphor in Pherecrates *Miners* fr. 113 = Athenaeus 268d–269c. A woman who has seen the marvelous banquet of Hades is told, Οἶμ' ὥς ἀπολείς μ' ἐνταῦθα διατρίβουσ' ἔτι, παρὸν κολυμβάν ὥς ἔχετ' εἰς τὸν Τάρταρον “Woman, you’ll kill me if you stay here any longer, when you can dive into the Underworld” (tr. Storey). Eur. *Hel.* 1016: ὁ νοῦς τῶν καθανόντων ζῆ μὲν οὐ, γνώμην δ' ἔχει ἀθάνατον εἰς ἀθάνατον αἰθέρ' ἐμπεσών “the mind of the dead is not alive, yet it has eternal awareness as it falls into eternal ether.” Cf. Plut. *Lat. Viv.* 1130c–e: dead men who have led a wicked life are thrown into a bottomless and yawning sea (καταποντίζων εἰς ἄβυσσον καὶ ἀχανὲς πέλαγος).

24. Glosses of the word ἀρνευτήρ appear frequently in Homeric commentators and lexicographers, e.g., Apollon. *Lex. Hom.* 43.17; Hesych. s.v. ἀρνευτήρι; Suda s.v. ἀρνευτήρ.

25. E.g., Herodas *Mimiambi* 8.42 Cunningham (describing Dionysiac dances); Gr. Nazian. *Carm. Mor.* 904.12 (on acrobatics); Lyc. *Al.* 465 (Ajax “diving” on Hector’s sword to commit suicide); Ath. 7.68.11–13 and 7.119–21 (about a fish named the hippurus, which tumbles “ἀρνευτήν ἵππουρον”).

26. See Nagy 1990 for an interpretation of the Leucadian Leap that takes the cosmic and celestial associations of diving into account. For a discussion of the daily cleansing of celestial bodies in the Ocean, see Chapter 1.

27. British Museum, E466, ca. 430 BC.

28. Cf. also the use of the verb δύω, which can describe the setting of celestial bodies as well as a plunge into Hades: e.g., *Il.* 3.322, 6.19, 411, 7.131; *Od.* 12.383; Aesch. *Ag.* 1123. See Bader 1986.

29. Mela 3.32: *in pelagus* “into the deep of the sea”; Pliny 4.89: *in mare* “into the sea.”

30. Cf. Versnel 1980: 154: “The jumping from rocks into the sea or a chasm is a direct passage into the Underworld.”

31. Nagy 1990: 243–46.

32. On the Hyperboreans, see Romm 1989; Brown 1992; Kyriazopoulos 1993.

33. Plin. *HN* 4.89: *mors non nisi satietate vitae* “death does not come upon them unless they are satisfied with life”; Mela 3.32: *vivendi satietas magis quam taedium* “satisfied with life rather than weary.”

34. Cic. *De Leg.* 2.57 indicates that if a person dies at sea, their family incurs no pollution because no bones remain on earth. Furthermore, the Hyperboreans are known to live in a state of permanent purity: Pind. *Pyth.* 10.41–44 calls them ἱερὰ γενεᾶ “holy people.”

35. Cf. Bonnechere 2003: 139–82 describes the terror of the pilgrims at the oracle of Trophonius when they perform a *katabasis* “infernal descent” into the cave of the dead hero. Many aspects of the consultation of Trophonius recall a descent into Hades.

36. Parth. *Amat.* 26. Cf. Euph. fr. 415, 13 (Lloyd-Jones-Parsons, *Supplementum Hellenisticum*, 1983).

37. Paus. 7.23.3.

38. Paus. 2.30.3, 3.14.2, 8.2.4, 9.40.3. Hesych. s.v. Aphaia (identifies Artemis, Dictynna, and Aphaia); Ant. Lib. 40; Diod. Sic. 5.76.3–4.

39. Sourvinou-Inwood 1987; Dowden 1989: 70–96. See also Hoffmann 1992.

40. Sourvinou-Inwood 1987: 138. See also Ball 1989.

41. Dowden 1989: 177.

42. Cf. the story of Halia, who throws herself into the sea after being raped by her own sons: Diod. Sic. 5.55.4–7. Other similar stories in Ps.-Plut. *De Fluv.* 5, 9, 18, where maddened protagonists throw themselves into rivers rather than the sea.

43. This may explain Pausanias’s comment according to which the only women who immerse themselves under the sea are those who are still pure virgins (καταδύνονται δὲ ἐς θάλασσαν γένους τοῦ θήλεος αἱ καθαρῶς ἔτι παρθένου: Paus. 10.19.2). This belief seems to stem from the accumulation of love stories featuring the motif of the chase at the time, rather than from the actual practice of ordeals by water to determine virginity, pace Glotz 1904 and McHardy 2008.

44. See Dowden 1989: 9–47.

45. Cf. Trojan girls about to be married bathed in the river Scamander and prayed that the river would take their virginity: Ps.-Aesch. *Epist.* 10.3–8; see Gallini 1963: 81; Dillon 2002: 219.

46. Dowden 1989: 71–96.

47. On the sterility of the sea, see Chapter 1. On women and the sea in Greek tragedy, see Serghidou 1991.

48. Pind. *Nem.* 1.1; Str. 6.2.4; Pol. 12.4d; Verg. *Aen.* 3.694–96; Ov. *Met.* 5.573–641; Am. 3.6.29; Paus. 5.7.2.

49. Strab. 6.2.4; Paus. 5.7.1–5. See Chapter 1. On ἔδνα “marriage gifts” as symbolizing a permanent marital union, see Ferrari 2002: 194.
50. See also Ov. *Met.* 13.750–878.
51. We note that the successful lover Alpheius brought terrestrial gifts to Arethusa: leaves, flowers, and sacred dust (Moschus fr. 3, line 3).
52. Diod. Sic. 5.62–63. Cf. Suda s.v. Tenedios anthropos, where Hemithea is thrown into a chest with her brother Tennes because of their stepmother’s jealousy. This version seems to follow the myths of both Ino and Rheoo.
53. According to Hyg. *Poet. astr.* 2.25, Apollo was the natural father of Parthenos. As in the story of Rheoo, Apollo and Dionysus have complementary roles in the story. See Suárez de la Torre 2013.
54. See Larson 1995: 110.
55. Staphylus is the son of Dionysus: Apollod. 1.9; Diod. 5.62.1; Parth. 1; schol. Ap. Rhod. *Arg.* 3.997; schol. Lyc. *Al.* 570.
56. Sall. *fr. incerta.* 87 (Dietsch); Plin. *HN* 7.199.
57. Apollod. 1.8; Serv. ad Verg. *Aen.* 3.73; Hyg. *Fab.* 53; Call. *Hymn. Ap.* 36–40. Alternatively, in schol. Stat. *Theb.* 4.796, Asteria is thrown into the sea by her lover.
58. Hyg. *Fab.* 53, 140. In schol. Call. *Hymn. Ap.* 59 and Ar. *Av.* 870, Leto herself metamorphoses into a quail.
59. Plin. *HN* 10.33; cf. Psalms 78:26–30; 105:39–42; Numbers 11:31–33; Exodus 16:13.
60. E.g., Ar. *Pax*, 789; Plut. *Alcib.* 10.
61. Ar. *Av.* 707; Pl. *Lys.* 211E; *Anth. Pal.* 12.44 (Glaucus); Dio.Chrys. 46.
62. Berlin, Pergamon Museum, 1791.
63. According to Apollodorus 1.52, Zeus had to punish Alcyone and Ceyx’s *hybris* by turning them into kingfishers because they were so happy together that they compared themselves to Zeus and Hera.
64. Ov. *Met.* 11.410–748; Hyg. *Fab.* 65; Ps.-Luc. *Halc.* 1–2; *Il.* 9.562–63 with schol.; Apollod. 1.52; Serv. *Georg.* 1.399. See Thompson 1895: 28–32.
65. On halcyons, see Arist. *HA* 542b, 593b, 616a.
66. Hecataeus *FGH* 1F30; Ov. *Met.* 11.270; Hyg. *Fab.* 65, 244; Apollod. 1.52.
67. Arat. *Phaen.* 262; Procl. ad Hes. *Op.* 381.
68. Schol. Arat. 254–55 p. 202.10. *De signis tempestatum* 6; Arat. *Phaen.* 1.266.
69. Alc. fr. 26 *PMG*; Simon. fr. 3 *PMG*; Eur. *IT* 1090; Ar. *Ran.* 1309; Mosch. 3.40; Opp. *Hal.* 1.424. See also Ibycus fr. 8 (13). Marpessa was called Halcyone in memory of her abduction by Apollo: *Il.* 9.562–64.
70. Ov. *Met.* 11.749–95; Serv. ad Verg. *Aen.* 4.254; 5.128.
71. The pursuit and snake bite suffered by Hesperia in Ovid seem imitated from Aristaeus’s pursuit of Eurydice in Verg. *G.* 457–59.
72. Cf. Cynus who was metamorphosed into a swan after losing his lover and diving into a lake: Ant. Lib. 12 (quoting Nicander); Ov. *Met.* 7. 371–79. Other mythological characters named Cynus are described as violent and arrogant: Cynus son of Poseidon, killed by Achilles and transformed into a swan by his father (Pind. *Ol.* 2.147, Strab. 13.119; Paus. 10.14.1), Cynus son of Ares, killed by Heracles (*Scut.* 57; Pind. *Ol.* 10.15). Cynus king of Liguria was a friend of Phaeton, who mourned for him at his death and was transformed into a melodious swan by Apollo (Ov. *Met.* 2.367).
73. See Cursaru 2012.
74. Bonnechere 2003: 299–304. For the funerary and eschatological significance of the swan, see Pl. *Phd* 84e–85b, discussed in Chapter 4.
75. Ca. 760–750 BC, National Archaeological Museum, Athens, 804.
76. Attic Geometric krater by the Hirschfeld Painter, 750–735 BC, Athens, National Archaeological Museum, 990.
77. E.g., CVA, Baltimore, 1, Johns Hopkins University, 41.133 (a naked woman offers a duck at a gravesite while a draped youth stands by the stele); Athens, National Museum, 1769, Beazley ARV², 1232.9 (a woman and a youth holding a bird cage are near a stele); Paris, Louvre, MNB 1729, Beazley ARV², 1374.2 (two youths at a stele, one with lyre the other with spears and bird); CVA, Reading University, 1, 23, plate 540, 13.7A–B (a woman holding a bird embarks in Charon’s boat). The CVA lists 24 fifth-century white-ground lekythoi depicting funerary scenes in which birds or ducks are offered at a tomb or brought by the dead into Charon’s boat, and there are no doubt many others.
78. E.g., CVA 29862, Athenian red-figure, white-ground lekythos, fifth century BC: funerary scene. Woman with basket and alabastron at tomb, heron attending.

79. Antig. *Mir.* 122. 1; Arr. *Peripl. M. Eux.* 21.1–4. The birds may be shearwaters: Thompson 1895: 17–18.
80. Plin. *HN* 10.126–27. On the birds of Diomedes, see Thompson 1918. See also Fowler 1918: 67.
81. Strab. 15.3.2 (location of the tomb); Paus. 10.31.6; Plin. *HN* 10.74; Ael. *NA* 5.1; Solin. 40; Ov. *Am.* 1.13.3–4; *Met.* 13.607; Quint. Smyrn. 2.645; Dion. Av. 1.8; Isid. 12.7; *Myth. Vat.* 1.139. See Thompson 1918.
82. Thompson 1918: 93.
83. Hesych. s.v. ἀντίψυχοι. Cf. Dio Cassius 59.8. Thompson 1895: 116 identifies these birds as ruffs, large marine birds similar to the heron, but recants in Thompson 1918 and follows Fowler 1918 in identifying them as shearwaters. On the meaning of ἀντίψυχοι as “those who die in place of another,” see Versnel 1980: 170. On souls and birds in the iconography of the *psychostasia* between Achilles and Memnon, see Burgess 2004.
84. On the literary motif of the tomb by the sea, see Pearce 1983.
85. The island is sacred to Achilles: Eur. *Andr.* 1262 with schol.; Scyl. 68.14; Ptol. *Geog.* 3.10.9; Paus. 3.19.11; Procl. *Chr.* 200; St. Byz. *Ethn.* 152.10; Tzetz. *Chil.* 11.396. The island got its name from the large flocks of white seabirds that inhabited it: Eur. *IT* 434–38; *Et. Gen.* s.v. Leukê; *Etym. Magn.* s.v. Leukê; Tzetz. ad Lyc. 186; schol. Pind. *Nem.* 4.79a–b.
86. Helen, Ajax, Antilochus, and Patroclus: Paus. 3.19.11; Medea: Apollod. *Epit.* 5, 5a; Iphigeneia: Ant. Lib. 27.4; Eust. *Dion. Per.* 306.19, 541.13; schol. Eur. *Andr.* 1262; Achilles: schol. Pind. *Nem.* 4.79a–b.
87. Philostr. *Her.* 746.10.
88. On birds as intermediaries between mortals and immortals, see Vidal-Naquet 1993.
89. See Turner 2005.
90. Dowden 1989: 180–81. E.g., Athenian red-figure pyxis, fifth century BC, Jena, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität, CVA 46958: youth pursuing a woman, other women, one feeding a heron; Athenian red-figure hydria, fifth century BC, London, British Museum, 83.11–24.26: domestic scene, women, one seated, one with mirror, alabastra suspended, heron; Athenian red-figure cup, late fifth century BC, CVA 200992: erotic scene, youth embracing a girl, beside them a crane. Inscription: Εἰδορομος καλος; Apulian red-figure bell krater, Verona, Museo Civico, 171: seated woman with mirror, standing nude youth holding duck.
91. Paus. 8.22.7–8. Dowden 1989: 180–81.
92. Bevan 1989. The finds included in the study are mostly Geometric, Archaic, and Classical.
93. For instance, Bevan indicates that 50 bird figurines were dedicated to Zeus at Olympia (including 20 water birds), as opposed to 1,600 horses. At Delphi, 21 figurines of waterbirds were offered to Apollo and 50 horses. By comparison, 150 bird figurines (including 40 water birds) were dedicated to Artemis at Sparta, and only 13 horses. At Lindos 240 bird figurines were offered to Athena, but fewer than 30 horses.
94. Thompson 1895: 147–48.
95. Eusth. *Od.* 1 p. 65.36; schol. *Od.* 4.797; schol. Lyc. *Al.* 791 (in this latter version Penelope is still a girl and it is unclear why she is thrown into the sea by her parents). Dowden 1989: 181.
96. See also Alcmān, fr. 50 (Page). According to Ant. Lib. *Met.* 15, the bird of Leucothea is the βύσσα, another species of marine duck. For the differences between the αἰθυῖα and the βύσσα (or βύνη), see the relevant entries in Thompson 1895. In Ov. *Met.* 4.550–62, the Theban companions of Ino who run to the promontory where she threw herself into the sea are turned into stone and into seabirds. For the significance of the βύνη as “feeding,” see Lambin 2006. Athena was also associated with the shearwater, and worshipped as Athena Aithyia near Megara: Paus. 1.5.3; 1.41.6; Lyc. 359; Hesych. s.v. *en d’aithyia*. Unfortunately, we have no further information about this cult or its significance. Athena also appears as an owl and as a vulture (φῆνη: *Od.* 3.371–72) in other contexts.
97. See amphora from Capua, Naples, Museo Nazionale 270 (*LMC* s.v. Ino 13). On this vase, Ino furiously pursues Phrixus with an axe, but the youth is making his escape on the golden ram. According to Hdt. 7.197, Athamas plots the death of Phrixus with Ino.
98. Pind. fr. 49 (Snell-Maehler); Pherecydes *FGrH* 3F98; Soph. *Athamas* (according to schol. Ar. *Nub.* 257); Hippias *FGrH* 6F11. This version recalls the story of Phaëdra.
99. Pherecydes in schol. Pind. *Pyth.* 4.288; Pherecydes in Eratosth. *Catast.* 1.19; Pherecydes in Hyg. *Astr.* 2.20; schol. *Il.* 7.86; Apollod. 1.80; Menecrates of Tyre in Zen. 4.38; Ov. *Fasti* 3.851–76; Hyg. *Fab.* 2; Paus. 1.44.7, 9.34.5–8; schol. Ar. *Nub.* 257. According to Ov. *Fasti* 6.551–62, Ino plotted to have the grain parched because Athamas had intercourse with one of the servants. Different versions of this last story are mentioned by Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 267D, and Stephanus s.v. halos (Theon).

100. Bremmer 1983, updated in Bremmer 2008.

101. Paus. 9.34.8. See also schol. Ap. Rhod. 1.185, 2.1122. On Phrixus's coming-of-age, see Bonnechere 1994: 96–107.

102. Xenoph. in Arist. *Rh.* 1440b5: Xenophanes is asked by the Eleans whether they should sacrifice and sing a dirge to Leucothea. Xenophanes replies that if they consider her a goddess, they should not sing dirges, but if they believed she was mortal, they should not sacrifice (cf. Plut. *Apophth. Lac.* 228e). The debate emphasizes Ino-Leucothea's double nature as a mortal who has become immortal.

103. Fontenrose 1948: 144 suggests that Eidothea, who appears to Menelaus in *Od.* 4.363–446, is the same goddess as Ino-Leucothea. However, Eidothea is the daughter of Proteus, not of Cadmus. She is therefore fully divine, unlike Ino.

104. On the significance of Leucothea's veil in the *Odyssey*, see Kardulias 2001.

105. Just as Odysseus's landing in Phaeacia illustrates his salvation as a transition from sea to land, Ino's own salvation through immortality was portrayed as her coming ashore. Some claimed that she landed in Megara and others in Corone: Paus. 4.34.4. In Megara, Ino had a heroic shrine and a temple on a cliff by the sea at the location where she was said to have washed ashore: Paus. 1.42.8, 1.44.11; Plut. *Quaest. Conv.* 675e.

106. *Anth. Pal.* 7.285 (Glaucus of Nicopolis), 7.295 (Leonidas of Tarentum), 7.374 (Marcus Antoninus).

107. E.g., *IG* III 368. Our earliest documentary attestation of the cult of Ino-Leucothea is a votive marble stele from Larissa, Volos Mus. E 543–404, third century BC. See *LIMC* s.v. Ino, A1. On the cults of Ino/Leucothea, see Koch-Piettre 2005: 78; Krauskopf 1981; Will 1952: 167; Fontenrose 1948; Méautis 1930; Farnell 1916; *RE* s.v. Leucothea (Eitrem). Many inscriptions from the first century AD confirm the identity of Ino and Leucothea: Bonnet 1986: 65. Cult of Ino-Leucothea in Chaironea: Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 267d. These cults must not be confused with the cults of other divinities from the Aegean named Leucothea. A certain Halia/Leucothea was worshipped in Rhodes according to Diod. Sic. 5.55.4–7. According to Hesych. s.v. *Leucotheai*, all marine goddesses are called Λευκοθέαι. In the *Etym. Magn.* s.v. *Leucotheai*, we find that the historian Myrsilos of Lesbos applied the name Leucothea to all Nereids. Epigraphical evidence attests that many cities of the eastern Aegean (Lampsakos, Chios, Teos, Knidos, and the whole coast of Asia Minor) had a month Leukatheon, but it is impossible to discover whether or not it was related to Ino or to some other deity. See Krauskopf 1981: 144 and *RE* s.v. Leucothea, col. 2295–96 (Eitrem). A votive stele from Pherai is dedicated to the Λευκαθέαι: *IG* IX 2, 422 (unknown date).

108. *IG* III 368, unknown date. Gelzer called it “antiqua,” but Eitrem in *RE* s.v. Leucothea, col. 2294, affirms that it dates from the Roman period. See Farnell 1916: 38. At Rome, Ino and her son Melicertes were identified with the gods Mater Matuta and Portunus who ensured a safe return to the harbor for sailors: Cic. *Tusc.* 1.12.28; *Nat. Deor.* 3.15.39; Hyg. *Fab.* 2. On Ovid's treatment of Ino as a properly Roman goddess in the *Fasti* (she is deified in Italy according to *Fasti* 6.475–550), see Parker 1999.

109. Schol. Ap. Rhod. *Arg.* 1.917; schol. *Il.* 24.78; Krauskopf 1981: 144. The initiates wrapped such a veil—a strip of purple cloth—around their chests during the ceremonies. Méautis 1930: 335–38 lists coins representing Ino-Leucothea adorned with a *kredemnon*. According to Clem. Al. *Protr.* 4.57, the presence of a veil allows to identify the representations of Leucothea.

110. Eur. *Med.* 1282–89; *Ino* fr. 398–427 (Nauck²). See *LIMC* s.v. Ino, nos. D 10–11–12 (Nercessian): red-figure amphora by Hermonax from Locris, Athens, coll. A. Kyrou (ca. 460 BC); fragment of a relief bowl (second century BC); Etruscan stamnos, Rome, Villa Giulia, 2350. For an analysis of the various representations of Ino and Athamas raising Dionysus, see Oakley 1982a. Apollod. 3.28; Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 267e; *Am. Prolis* 492d; Lucian, *Dial. Mar.* 9.1; Ov. *Fasti* 6.485–88; Hyg. *Fab.* 2. Hyg. *Fab.* 4 affirms that Euripides, in his lost tragedy *Ino*, told the story of Ino's cunning trick to kill the children of Themisto. However, Nauck expresses doubts as to the validity of this claim. See Nauck-Snell 1964: 482.

111. Eur. *Med.* 1282–89 with schol. 1284; Apollod. 1.84; 3.4.3; Ov. *Met.* 4.416–562; *Fasti* 6.485–500; Callistr. 14; Servius ad Verg. *Aen.* 5.241; Lact. ad Stat. *Theb.* 1.12; 7.421; *Etym. Magn.* s.v. *Athamantion*; schol. *Od.* 5.334; schol. Luc. *Dial. Mar.* 9.1; Arg. I, 3, 4 ad Pind. *Isthm.* (Drachmann); Eusth. ad *Il.* 7.86 p. 667; Hyg. *Fab.* 2, 4; Tzetz. ad Lyk. *Al.* 229; Vat. Myth. 2.79. Many representations of Ino leaping into the sea with Melicertes are known: see *LIMC*, s.v. Ino.

112. Aesch. fr. 1–2 (Nauck²); Apollod. 3.28; Nonnus *Dion.* 10.45–107; Ov. *Met.* 4.481–542; Tzetz. ad Lyc. *Al.* 229.

113. Ov. *Met.* 4.532–42; *Etym. Magn.* s.v. *Athamantion*; Pind. *Pyth.* 11.2; *Ol.* 2.28–30; Eur. *Med.*

1282–89; Ov. *Fasti* 6.481–562; Sen. *Oed.* 444–48; Luc. *Dial. Mar.* 9; Callistr. *Imag.* 14; Tzetz. ad Lyc. *Al.* 229; Nonn. 9.243–10.137; Arg. A and D ad Pind. *Isthm.* (Drachmann). Ino is loved by Poseidon under the sea: Luc. *Dial. Mar.* 9; Ael. Arist. *Or.* 3.26.

114. See Larson 1995: 123–25.

115. On Medea's flying chariot, see Elice 2004. On Medea in general, see Moreau 1994a. According to Paus. 2.3.5, Glauce leaps into a spring to heal herself from Medea's poisons.

116. Conon 33. Krauskopf 1981: 144 n. 29.

117. Méautis 1930: 335.

118. *SEG* 26, 1976/77, no. 683: this dedication to Ino (second half/late third century AD) mentions that she was the nurse of Dionysus.

119. For Ino as the archetypal Maenad, see Henrichs 1978: 123–43.

120. Hyg. *Fab.* 2 and 4 (Ino Euripidis); Nonnus *Dion.* 9.302–10.137.

121. In the Roman period, Ino became known as the first Maenad. Some Theban women, allegedly her descendants, were brought to Magnesia in the Hellenistic period with the consent of the Delphic oracle to celebrate Dionysiac *orgia*. See Burkert 1987: 34. Kern, *Inschriften von Magnesia*, 215a. See Henrichs 1978: 123–43 for an analysis of the inscription.

122. E.g., Eur. *Bacch.* 298–99: μάντις δ' ὁ δαίμων ὄδε· τὸ γὰρ βακχεύσιμον καὶ τὸ μανιῶδες μαντικὴν πολλὴν ἔχει “But this god is a prophet—for Bacchic revelry and madness have in them much prophetic skill” (tr. Buckley). Pl. *Phdr.* 244a–245a: *mantike* “divination” and *manike* “delirium” are etymologically identical. See Chirassi-Colombo 1991; Dietrich 1992.

123. Krauskopf 1981: 144 n. 27. This city also had a month Leukatheon: Kern, *Inschriften von Magnesia*, nr. 89.

124. Paus. 3.23.8. It was considered a favorable sign if the cakes offered to the goddess sank into the water.

125. Larson 1995: 125.

126. E.g., Dionysus's descent to Hades in Aristophanes' *Frogs*. See Daraki 1982.

127. Farnell 1916, Leucothea 37. See Pharmakowsky 1907: 126–27 for the full text of the inscription.

128. According to Paus. 3.26.1, there was an oracle of Ino in Thalamai that worked by incubation. However, since a votive inscription to Pasiphae was found on the site, Krauskopf 1981: 145 considers it unlikely that Ino was worshipped there. According to Cic. *De Div.* 1.43.96, Plut. *Agis* 9, *Cleom.* 7, and Ptol. 3.16.22, the oracle belonged to Pasiphae.

129. *Glauco Pontius*, fr. 25a (Radt); Ov. *Met.* 13.944–55.

130. Apollod. 3.28; Nonnus *Dion.* 9.243–10.137 (Athamas); Tzetz. ad Lyc. *Al.* 229; Arg. A and D ad Pind. *Isthm.* (Drachmann); schol. ad Luc. *Dial. Mar.* 9, 1.

131. *OGIS* 611 = *SEG* 7, 241; *IGRR* III 1075. See Bonnet 1986. Aliquot 2002 argues against Bonnet and claims that the participle ἀποθεωθέντος means “received funerary honors” rather than “was divinized.”

132. Aesch. fr. 5 and 228 (Radt); Call. *Aitia* fr. 43.177; Plut. *De E* 389a.

133. Ov. *Met.* 7.252–93. For a full discussion and a catalogue of sources on the motif of the cauldron in Greek mythology, see Halm-Tisserant 1993. See also Laurens 1984, who does not discuss the myth of Ino.

134. Ov. *Met.* 4.539–42. Cf. Achilles, who is made immortal by immersion in the waters of the Styx (Stat. *Achil.* 1.269; Hyg. *Fab.* 107). See Méautis 1930.

135. *IG* 12, 94 (fifth century BC); Aeschin. *Ctes.* 130 with scholia; Plut. *Phoc.* 28; Hesych. s.v. Rhotioi; *Etym. Magn.* s.v. Hiera Hodos. See Ginouvès 1962: 376.

136. See Versnel 1980: 151; Duchêne 1992.

137. Similarly, documents from the Roman period attest that when new hierophants were initiated at Eleusis, they inscribed their birth names on tablets that they threw into the sea so as to be rid of their old identity and assume completely that of a hierophant: *IG* II2 3811; Ginouvès 1962: 379–80; Gallini 1963: 64–65. This change of name and aggregation into a community by means of an immersion has been compared to the Christian ritual of baptism. See Borzsák 1951.

138. The voluntary character of the dive promotes the relationship with the divine, as in cases of sacrifice and especially self-sacrifice. See Versnel 1980; Bremmer 1983; and Koch-Piettre 2005.

139. Ginouvès 1962: 416–28.

140. See Sourvinou-Inwood 2003, esp. 40.

1. Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Inv. 2044.
2. E.g., Kossatz and Kossatz-Deissman 1992.
3. Descoeudres 2000.
4. E.g., *Hymn. Hom. Ap.*; Attic hydria, fifth century BC, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco, Vatican 16568 (Apollo in flying tripod with dolphins: see Chapter 4 and Fig. 15).
5. E.g., *Il.* 13.17–38; black-figure attic lekythos, 525–475 BC, Munich, Antikensammlungen Inv. J361, CVA 390492 (Poseidon rides a winged horse just above the surface of the sea). See Petrisor (Cursaru) 2009: 333–74.
6. E.g., birth of Aphrodite from the sea, Hes. *Theog.* 190–202; “Ludovisi throne,” Rome, Museo Nazionale (Palazzo Alltemps) inv. 85702.
7. Call. *Aitia* fr. 43,177; Plut. *De E* 389a. The myth’s origin and date are controversial. See Henrichs 1993: 26. According to Diod. Sic. 5.75.4, Persephone was Dionysus’s mother, which emphasizes his connection with death.
8. Henrichs 1993: 18.
9. Paus. 3.24.3.
10. See also Nonnus *Dion.* 20.143–21.169.
11. Xenophanes in Arist. *Rh.* 1440b5.
12. Hdt. 1.24–25; Plut. *Conv.* 161b–f. See Chapter 4.
13. Whether the Tyrrhenians are Etruscan or not is a matter of controversy: Hes. *Theog.* 1015–16; Hecat. *FGrH* 1F18; Hdt. 1.167, 4.145, 6.137–40; Thuc. 4.109; Philoch. *FGrH* 328F100; Diod. Sic. 10.19.6; Theophr. *FGrH* 115F204. See Beatrice 2001: 279.
14. Alternatively, in Eur. *Cycl.* 10–26, Hera sets the Tyrrhenian pirates after Dionysus in the hope of having him sold into slavery. Silenus and the satyrs go to his rescue but are blown off course and captured by Polyphemus, who makes them his servants.
15. Cf. Ovid *Met.* 3.670: *sive hoc insania fecit sive timor* “either madness or fear caused this”; Serv. ad Verg. *Aen.* 1.67: *terrore se illi in fluctus dedere praecipites* “out of terror they flung themselves headlong into the sea.”
16. See Ehrhardt 1993. Other representations of the confrontation collated in Descoeudres 2002: n. 40 include a fragment of a Tarentine funerary relief, fourth century BC, National Museum, photograph in Kossatz and Kossatz-Deissman 1992: 472 plate 108, 2; another fragment of a fourth-century BC Tarentine funerary relief (private collection), photograph in Kossatz and Kossatz-Deissman 1992: 472, plate 108, 3; lid of a third-century AD Roman sarcophagus, Musée de Philippeville, *LIMC* 558, no. 238; mosaic, Tunis, Musée du Bardo, inv. 2884; third-century AD amphoriskos from Tunisia, photograph in Heimberg 1976: 256–65 figs. 3–6. See DeCou 1893; James 1975; Herter 1980; Stupperich 1984; Spivey and Rasmussen 1986; Kossatz and Kossatz-Deissman 1992; Descoeudres 2000; Csapo 2003.
17. Ehrhardt 1993: fig. 2.
18. In Seneca, Nereus is said to produce the illusion, a detail that is unique in the traditions concerning the Tyrrhenian pirates. See James 1975: 26.
19. Nonnus tells the story in different ways in different passages of the *Dionysiaca*: 31.89–91, 44.240–49, 47.507–8, 47.629–32. See James 1975: 28–29.
20. E.g., the story of Cyparissus in Ov. *Met.* 10.106–42. See Connors 1992.
21. Motte 1973; see also Calame 1998; Bonnechere 2007.
22. Bonnechere 2007: 20.
23. Cole 2003: 198.
24. On the importance of the spring, see Bonnechere 2007: 19.
25. Aug. *C. Jul.* 4.16.83 (P. Lat. 44.782); Lact. *Div. Inst.* 3.18.18 p. 240 (Brandt); Jambl. *Protrep.* fr.10b (Ross). Augustine refers back to Cicero’s *Hortensius*, who cited Aristotle as an authority for the practices of the Tyrrhenian pirates. In the passages cited, the philosophers use the image of the pirates’ method of torture to describe the condition of the soul as it is bound to the body. See Brunschwig 1963; Beatrice 2001.
26. The CVA lists over fifty such kylikes and seventeen skyphoi, for instance, Athenian black-figure kylix from Vulci, 525–475 BC, CVA 768. The exterior of the cup shows Dionysus and a satyr between satyrs riding mules. Branches of ivy decorate the background, and a dolphin is depicted under each handle. Athenian black-figure skyphos, 525–475 BC, CVA 7059, Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig: Z326. The exterior of the vase shows a youth playing the pipes between dancing women. Dolphins decorate the area under each handle.
27. Descoeudres 2000, esp. 332. On a Corinthian kylix in the Louvre, a reveler gives a rhyton to a

dolphin: Paris, Louvre, MNC 674. On an Attic kylix also preserved in the Louvre, satyrs and dolphins are reveling together: Beazley, ARV² 635, no 34. Finally, on an Attic-style black-figure krater in the Louvre, a symposium is depicted surrounded with dolphins and marine birds, CVA France, 19, Louvre 12, plate 160, 580–570 BC. See Deonna 1922; Brommer 1942a; Zeuner 1963; Ridgway 1970; Isler 1977; Davies 1978; Piettre 1996; Csapo 2003; Pisano 2008.

28. Cup of Exekias (Fig. 17). See Descoeudres 2000: 334; Rothwell 2007: 63–65. The scene could also conceivably represent Dionysus's arrival in a boat, which was celebrated in the festivals of many Greek cities. On these festivals, see Burkert 1983 [1972]: 200–201; Bonnechere 1994: 202 and notes. In the Hellenistic period and later, dolphins are common as part of the marine *thiasos* of Dionysus. See Lattimore 1976.

29. Isler 1985; Ambrosini 1999–2000; Ambrosini 2001.

30. Sifakis 1967; Rothwell 2007.

31. Further examples include the following: an Etruscan black-figure kalpis, ca. 500 BC, formerly in the Toledo Museum of Art (82.154), shows six men in the process of transforming into dolphins; a Pontic amphora from Cerverteri (end of the fifth century BC, CVA Musei Capitolini, 2, 1965, plate 33) attributed to the Paris painter represents three men with dolphin tails and human bodies and legs pursuing four women. The skyphos of Boston (Museum of Fine Arts, 20, 18) represents six warriors mounted on dolphins riding toward a piper. On the other side, six smaller warriors are riding on ostriches also toward a piper and another smaller masked figure. A frieze of ivy decorates the upper lip of the cup. A cup in the Louvre (Paris, CA 1924) shows seven armed dolphin riders and a piper with big ivy leaves among them. A lekythos in the Kerameikos Museum in Athens (Kerameikos Museum, Brommer 1942a: fig. 5) has a warrior riding a dolphin on the one side, while a piper and a frieze of ivy decorate the other side. The psykter of Oltos (Fig. 20, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989.281.69) shows six hoplites riding dolphins. In front of each rider's mouth runs the retrograde inscription ΕΠΙΔΕΑΦΙΝΟΣ. A small terracotta statuette from Tanagra dating back to the end of the sixth century BC (Brommer 1942a: fig. 9) represents a warrior on a dolphin. On all these artifacts, and on their connection with dramatic performances, see Rothwell 2007: 36–80. A similar association between dolphins and the symposium appears on Etruscan mirrors. See Descoeudres 2000: 329, 332 and n. 33 for full bibliography; see also Spivey and Rasmussen 1986.

32. Descoeudres 2000: 332.

33. Isler 1977. Ionic dinos of Ticino, private collection, 530–510 BC; attic dinos from Etruria, Vienna, Kunshistorisches Museum, AS IV 3620, ca. 500 BC.

34. Psykter of Oltos, Attic, ca. 520–510 BC (Fig. 20, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989.281.69).

35. Similar representation of the large eyes that often decorate drinking cups. E.g., Athenian black-figure cup from Italy (Civita Castellana), 525–475 BC, CVA 13057, Rome, Mus. Naz. Etrusco di Villa Giulia: 3561. Large eyes depicted as concentric circles on the exterior of the vase and a dolphin under each handle. Other similar vases include an Athenian black-figure cup from Capua, 525–475 BC, CVA 306935, Capua, Museo Campano: 193. The exterior of the cup shows Dionysus seated on a stool with satyrs in between large eyes whose iris is made up of concentric circles. A dolphin is seen under each handle.

36. *Triskele* and other such whirling devices on shields are generally interpreted as apotropaic: see Chase 1902. The shield devices may well play a similar role here, comparable to the large eyes often found on drinking vessels. However, the whirling effect is polysemic, as its relationship with drunkenness, bacchic choruses, and the symposium cannot be ignored. See Csapo 2003.

37. Isler 1977: 32. The exact use of the psykter remains controversial, whether the psykter contained snow or ice water and the krater wine, or vice versa. However, considering the common imagery of boats floating and dolphins diving, I follow Davies 1978: 78 and n. 42 in his suggestion that the psykter contained water and the krater wine.

38. E.g., Eur. *Hel.* 1454–56: καλλιχόρων δελφίνων. See Lonsdale 1993: 96–97; Csapo 2003.

39. ὁ δὲ τὸν μὲν ἰστὸν καὶ τὰς κώπας ἐποίησεν ὄφεις, τὸ δὲ σκάφος ἐπλησε κισσοῦ καὶ βοῆς αὐλῶν· ἐμμανεῖς γενόμενοι κατὰ τῆς θαλάττης ἔφυγον καὶ ἐγένοντο δελφίνες “He turned the mast and the oars into snakes and filled the ship with ivy and the sound of flutes; they went mad and fled toward the sea and became dolphins.”

40. On the trance-inducing effects of the *aulos*, see Bonnechere 2003: 150–51. The dolphin famously enjoyed dancing to the music of the pipes—the dolphin's breathing hole was even called *aulos* in Greek. See Davies 1978: 75.

41. For the association between Dionysus and *mania*, see, e.g., *Il.* 6.132: μαινομένιοι Διωνύσοιο “of the raving Dionysus.” On *mania*, see Connor 1988.

42. See also Ov. *Met.* 3.582–691. At line 385, the pirates are said to dance: *chori ludunt speciem*, “they played in the manner of choral dancers.” In Luc. *De Salt.* 22, dancing is said to be the instrument of Dionysus’s victories over the Tyrrhenians, the Indians, and the Lydians. See also *Anth. Pal.* 9.82 (Antipater of Thessalonica).

43. Turner 2003 emphasizes the association of Dionysiac dancing with death and discusses examples of Dionysiac dancing in the afterlife. See also Lonsdale 1993.

44. In Nonnus *Dion.* 47.507–8, the Tyrrhenians’ ship is petrified in a scene that seems to recall the petrification of the Phaeacians’ ship. Cf. Philostr. *Imag.* 1.19, where Dionysus’s ship is said to “look like a stone” (πέτρῳ μοι διείκασται). See James 1975: 28.

45. Oppian *Hal.* 1.646–85 notes that dolphins have a human intellect and ethos because they used to be men before their metamorphosis at the hands of Dionysus. The scholia on the passage record an alternative tradition, according to which the pirates were wine merchants who mixed water with their wine and were transformed into “fish” (ἰχθύας) by Dionysus.

46. Cf. similar outcome in cases of *sparagmos*: Orpheus, who lives in close communication with the divine, suffers *sparagmos* and his remains are thrown into the sea, but his detached head survives and continues to offer prophecies: Verg. *G.* 4.520; Ov. *Met.* 11.50; Paus. 9.30.5; Stob. 4.20.47; Ps.-Eratosth. *Cat.* 24; Philostr. *VA* 4.14. In contrast, Pentheus, who refuses to participate in the frenzied worship of Dionysus, suffers *sparagmos* and dies an irredeemable death in Euripides’ *Bacchae*.

47. Henrichs 1993: 17.

48. See Piettre 2005: 86 n. 75.

49. Slater 1976; Davies 1978.

50. Paris, Louvre, G92. Further examples in Davies 1978.

51. See Davies 1978: 80.

52. Davies 1978: 81.

53. Attic skyphos, ca. 500 BC, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Taranto, 7029.

54. Similar compositions on a series of *lekythoi* have been interpreted by Ferrari and Ridgway 1981 as a representation of Heracles’ descent to Hades to capture Cerberus. However, see *LIMC* s.v. Herakles, no. 2623 for a divergent opinion.

55. Jaccottet 1990.

56. See Jannot 2005: 60–61; Krauskopf 2006.

57. For instance, the cup of Exekias (Fig. 17, Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen, inv. 2044) is from Vulci, as is as the Toledo kalpis (Fig. 21, formerly in the Toledo Museum of Art 82.154). A Pontic amphora from Cerveteri (end of the fifth century BC, CVA Musei Capitolini, 2, 1965, plate 33) attributed to the Paris painter represents three men with dolphin tails and human bodies and legs pursuing four women. The Attic kylix of the Villa Giulia (Fig. 22, 570–560 BC, Rome, Villa Giulia, 64608) showing a dolphin playing the pipes seems to have come to Etruria through trade. On the popularity of the dolphin as a religious symbol in the region of the Campi Flegrei, see Pisano 2008. On the similarities between the Greek and Etruscan view of Dionysus, see Bonfante 1993.

58. Steingraber 1986: no. 77.

59. Steingraber 1986: no. 50.

60. On waterbirds as symbols of the soul’s departure to the afterlife in funerary contexts, see Turcan 1959; Vermeule 1979: 7–11.

61. Descoeudres 2000.

62. See D’Agostino 1983.

63. Moretti 1966; Descoeudres 2000: 327; Steingraber 2006: 191 (with bibliography). Holloway 2003: 376, 384 notes that the symposium was not a funerary theme in Greece, but was present in Etruscan funerary painting.

64. Cf. similar imagery in the Tomba del Letto Funebre (Tarquinia, ca. 460 BC, Steingraber 1986: no. 82) and in the Tomba 5898 (Tomba con Coroncine) (Tarquinia, ca. 510 BC, Steingraber 1986: no. 167).

65. See D’Agostino 1983: 44; Ampolo 1993. On diving as a gesture representing death, see Deonna 1953; Cerchiai 1987; Warland 1998; Holloway 2003.

66. Steingraber 1986: no. 30.

67. Steingraber 1986: no. 2.

68. Steingraber 1986: no. 36.

69. Buranelli 1987.

70. Steingraber 1986: no. 48.

71. Steingraber 1986: no. 118.

CONCLUSION

1. E.g., Gallini 1963: 62. See also Starr 1950 and Raubitschek 1950, commenting on Lesky 1947.
2. Cumont 1942: 143–76.
3. Seals: *Od.* 4.333–570; whales: see Papadopoulos and Ruscillo 2002; octopods: *Plut. Conv.* 163a–d.
4. *Bacch.* 17.102.
5. See Shepard 1940; Lattimore 1976; Aston 2011.
6. Cumont 1942; Sichtermann 1970; Wrede 1973.
7. Piettre 2002.
8. Descoedres 2000.
9. Bonnechere 2003: 299–304; Burgess 2004.
10. Versnel 1980: 151.
11. Duchêne 1992.
12. E.g., schol. Aesch. 3.130: κατελθόντων τῶν μυστῶν ἐπὶ τὴν θάλασσαν ἐπὶ τὸ καθαρθῆναι “the initiates descending into the sea for the purpose of purification.”
13. See Ginouvès 1962: 416–28.
14. Papachatzis 1976; Cummer 1978; Günther 1988; Walter-Karydi 1991; Schumacher 1993; Sinn 2000; Mylonopoulos 2003.
15. Hubbell 1928; Teffeteller 2001.
16. *Hdt.* 1.24. Steures 1999; Gray 2001.
17. *Hes. Theog.* 278–88.
18. See Kokkinou 2014: 62.
19. Vilatte 1988; Wright 1996.
20. Vian 1944.
21. Kokkinou 2014: 59–63.
22. *Eur. Med.* 3; *Apollod.* 1.110; *Ap. Rhod. Arg.* 1.526.
23. Brûlé 1996.
24. *Ap. Rhod. Arg.* 1.1310–29.

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